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SPEECHES

ON THE

CONSERVATIVE POLICY

OF THE LAST THIRTY YEARS,

27268 a.c

BY

THE RT. HON. B. DISRAELI, M.P.,

LATE FIRST MINISTER OF THE CROWN.

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

BY JOHN F. BULLEY.

LONDON:
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INTRODUCTION.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI was born in the month of December, 1805—the eldest of the three sons of Isaac D'Israeli, of Bradenham, Bucks, Esquire. Of his boyhood and youth but little is known, save that from the first he evinced a desire to embrace the profession of which his father was so distinguished an ornament. Certain it is that as a boy he combined study and observation in an unusual degree, and at the age of twenty was both a scholar and a man of the world. In order to acquire that systematic habit of work which is essential to the success of even the highest genius, he was for some time placed in the office of a friendly solicitor. In his twentieth year he published the novel "Vivian Grey," which was shortly succeeded by other works of fiction, of which it is beside the present purpose here to treat. But it should be remarked, in passing, that three of his novels, "Coningsby," "Sybil," and "Tancred," written at a much later period of his life, are so purely political in their object that they must be read in connection with his speeches by any who would understand the character and policy of their author. "Sybil," especially, exhibits the nature of true Toryism, which has for its principal object the union of all classes in devotion to,

and in the development of, the established institutions of the country. The writer shows how two existences—and these the most important—the sovereign and the people, have been blotted out of the nation, and how that we must seek for the political regeneration of the country in the restoration of these to their proper place.

Previously to the year 1831 he passed some time in foreign travel; and, though in that year he contested the borough of High Wycombe, it was not till six years later that he entered the House of Commons as Member for Maidstone. In 1841 he was returned for Shrewsbury, and in 1847 for the county of Bucks, which constituency he has ever since represented. Before his first appearance in the Lower House, he had made some enemies by the vigour of his writings and his speeches on the hustings. To this circumstance must be attributed the partial failure of his maiden speech, which is printed herewith. He at once became the object of an unrelenting and ungenerous opposition, which has ever since persistently followed him. But he bided his time; and, when next he spoke, he was listened to. Gradually he made his way, till the Conservative party was destroyed by Sir Robert Peel, when he acted as the colleague of Lord George Bentinck, to whose command he succeeded on the death of that noble Lord. Since then, his work has been to recreate the shattered fragments of Conservatism into a new Tory party. Of that party he has been not merely the leader but the lawgiver; and they have been successful and influential in proportion as they have followed and obeyed him. In 1852, 1858—9, and 1866—7 he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, in each case under Lord Derby as Premier, and in 1868 he succeeded to the supreme power in the cabinet. The rest of his history is known to all, but many will remember the reception given to him when he first

crossed Palace Yard as First Minister of the Crown, outside the House, inside the lobby, and within the House itself by all classes of the people, who, even if they differed from his opinions as a politician, recognized the genius and the energy of the man. The persistent misrepresentation of Mr. Disraeli will excuse a few brief remarks offered as an introduction to a book which speaks for itself, and will be understood by those for whom it has been compiled.

No one has been more talked about and no one is less known or understood than Mr. Disraeli, and the present volume is an attempt to place him clearly and honestly before the people whom he has served. That is the only purpose which has guided this selection. The first speech on the list is inserted rather for its personal than its public interest, and for the sake of the prophecy with which it concludes: the rest are printed as sufficiently expressive of the speaker's policy on the questions of representation; the state of Ireland from time to time, and the Irish Church; the general principles of Toryism, and the Crimean War. To these are added a speech on the acquirement of knowledge; and some characteristic tributes to the memory of his departed contemporaries.

Mr. Disraeli's views on the important question of the relations between the Church and the State have already been separately published in an accessible form;* some of his best and most characteristic speeches are therefore reluctantly omitted.

The history of Representative Reform during the present century will be principally associated with the name of Mr. Disraeli. The course of policy which he has pursued has been to repair the breaches in the constitution effected by the legislation of 1832. Of the bill of that year it is unneces-

* "Church and Queen:" London, G. J. Palmer.

sary to speak. Let us say, it was the best that could be offered at that time by those who offered it, with such knowledge of the rights and requirements of the People, from the Sovereign downwards, as they then possessed. It was by accident that the premature and temporary settlement of the question fell into the hands of the Whigs. No one has done fuller justice to those statesmen than Mr. Disraeli; but the bill failed to reform the Representation.

By the passing of that measure the lower branch of the legislature ceased to be a representative assembly. It deprived the Aristocracy and the Labouring Classes as far as it could of their legitimate share in the counsels of the Nation. To restore the proper balance of power has been Mr. Disraeli's aim; and, though the measures which he proposed have had to pass through the furnace of opposition, time will probably show that he has succeeded in his aim. The one main principle, that underlies his policy, and his speeches upon this subject, is, that political power should be conferred wherever political responsibility exists. In attempting this, he has done his best to sweep away qualifications previously imposed, which he has himself denounced as arbitrary, irrational, and impolitic.

Mr. Disraeli's opponents have not used to confine their opposition within the ordinary limits of political abuse. More than one journal has devoted the best of its energies to destroy his position: his appearance, his manner, his gait, have been the frequent subjects of elaborate description. His history and his antecedents have been periodically invented with an inexhaustible fertility. The name of a deceased journal has been rescued from oblivion by an ingenious falsehood connecting it with his own. It may be worth while to state that he never wrote a single line in the *Representative*. The friends of Progress and the advocates of Equality

have called him an adventurer; but it should be remembered—it cannot be forgotten—that he is the son of one of the most distinguished scholars that England has produced, and it must be also remembered—if so vulgar a taunt deserves an answer—that he commenced his political career in a very much higher social position than either of his rivals in the Lower House. His descent is ancient and honourable, and his family bears a history to which most must yield. He has been styled a Jew; by birth he is so: as such he has been enabled more, perhaps, than any other man to explain the relations of Sinai and Calvary. Proud of his nation, his nation's religion is to him but as the part to the Whole, and he has ever advocated with consistent vigour the indefeasible claim upon Christianity of the Chosen People.* Even political malice has degenerated into malignity, and his enemies have not scrupled to avail themselves of the unschooled utterances of a boy of nineteen. But he has had to encounter the more bitter coolness of those whom he has so faithfully led. One, but just gone from among us, knew and therefore trusted him: others, who could think, have served under him with unfaltering loyalty; but a proportion of his party has repaid his fidelity with a half-hearted allegiance; and more than one effort has been made by some of his professed followers to dislodge him from his position as leader. These attacks have usually been anonymous—as might be expected.

To speak at any length in this place of Mr. Disraeli's personal character and private life would be both superfluous and impertinent. No man who has lived so much and for so many years in the public eye has been so fortunate in maintaining that privacy without which the life of such a man must to a refined and educated nature become intoler-

* *Vide* "Lord George Bentinck: a political Biography," Chap. xxiv.

able. We have here only to deal with that part of him which has had an influence on the history of his country. To those, however, who have the privilege of his personal acquaintance, and in whose neighbourhood he occupies the leisure of a recess, he is known rather as the kindly friend than as the distinguished statesman. The present selection has been purposely confined to those of his speeches which concern Public Policy, but others might easily be added, neither less eloquent nor less interesting, which have been made on less public occasions, in the comparative seclusion of a parochial or other rural gathering; and no man is more remarkable than he for the good encouragement which he is ever ready to afford to the humblest aspirant to emulate his example. His courtesy and generosity are known to all who have been brought into personal contact with him; while to his opponents he has always behaved with a chivalrous dignity which has done much to raise the tone of political conflict. That he has been misunderstood, is only the common fate of natures such as his. By persons of a certain stamp brilliancy must ever be mistaken for insincerity; courage for recklessness, and patience for timidity. But time will give a fairer estimate of his character and his work than is possible in the heat of party warfare.

Death and the daily occurrence of inevitable events impress upon us with unchallengeable certainty the fact that our country is entering upon new times:

"*The old order changeth, yielding place to new.*"

New lights offer to supply the place of departed leaders; new and great questions must ere long be newly and greatly met; parties, that have moderated their ideas, and altered their names, to suit the supposed exigencies of an age which they cannot comprehend, are slowly but surely dying out. And their place must be supplied by those who will dare to think,

to speak, to act bravely, and with regard to but one consequence. England is too great a nation to be ruled either by mere merchants or by theorists. If the people, enlightened and educated, require to be led, they will perhaps once more seek their necessary and natural leaders. They will no longer be governed by a phrase, nor acquiesce in an economy which has proved the ruin of their kind: they will ask for deeds not words; and will look for the regeneration of their country in the regeneration of corrupt parties. To render such a reorganisation possible it must at least be admitted that no man has contributed more fully, more faithfully, or more effectually, than Benjamin Disraeli. He has done more than any other to enable the gentlemen of England to resume their rightful position with intelligible consistency: he has educated not only his party, but the nation.

J. F. B.

LONDON; *1st November*, 1869.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE READER.

THE speeches which follow have, with one exception, been spoken within the walls of the House of Commons. These have been carefully collated with the authorized reports of "Hansard" and others. To them is added one on the "*Acquirement of Knowledge*," of which, it is believed, there is no distinctly authenticated report extant. It is, however, included in the collection, under the impression that, as it stands, it fairly represents the views of one of the first to call the attention of the nation to the necessity of National Education.

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SPEECHES

OF THE

RT. HON. BENJAMIN DISRAELI, M.P.

—o—

IRISH ELECTION PETITIONS.

—o—

HOUSE OF COMMONS, DECEMBER 7, 1837.

[The following was Mr. Disraeli's maiden speech in Parliament. In the *Times*' leading article on the Debate (Dec. 8, 1837) it is spoken of as "an eloquent speech."]

TRUST the House will extend to me that gracious indulgence which is usually allowed to one who solicits its attention for the first time. I have, however, had sufficient experience of the critical spirit which pervades the House, to know and to feel how much I stand in need of that indulgence—an indulgence of which I will prove myself to be not unworthy, by promising not to abuse it.

The hon. and learned Member for Dublin (Mr. O'Connell) has taunted the hon. Baronet, the Member for North Wiltshire (Sir Francis Burdett), with having uttered a long, rambling, wandering, jumbling speech. Now, I must say—

and I can assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that I paid the utmost attention to the remarks which flowed from him—that it seems to me that the hon. and learned Gentleman took a hint from the hon. Baronet in the oration which the hon. and learned Gentleman has just addressed to the House. There is scarcely a single subject connected with Ireland which the hon. and learned Member did not introduce into his rhetorical medley. The hon. and learned Member for Dublin also taunted the hon. and learned Member for Exeter (Sir W. Follett) with travelling out of the record of the present Debate, while he himself travelled back seven hundred years, though the House is engaged in the discussion of events which have taken place within the last few months.

The hon. and learned Member has favoured the House with an allusion to Poor Laws for Ireland. ["No, no."] Perhaps I may be wrong; but at all events there was an allusion to the Irish Corporation Bill. I do not pretend accurately to remember all the topics which the hon. and learned Member introduced into his speech; but, if no reference was made by the hon. and learned Gentleman to the subject of Irish Poor Laws, at least there was a dissertation upon the measure relating to the municipal corporations of Ireland. Is that subject relative to the Debate before the House?

I will not allude—I will spare the feelings of the hon. and learned Member in that respect—to the subscriptions which the hon. and learned Member told the House have not been successful on his side; but that circumstance may account for the bitterness with which he spoke of the successful efforts of the much-vilified Mr. Spottiswoode. I was, indeed, much inclined to ask the hon. Member for Limerick (Mr. O'Brien), if he attended the meeting, at

which it was expected that every Liberal Member would subscribe fifty pounds to the Protection Fund. I thought that perhaps the hon. Member could have given some curious information upon that subject; that though there may have been nearly £3000 to begin, there is now nothing in the Exchequer, and that this project of majestic mendicancy has now wholly vanished. The hon. and learned Member for Dublin has announced that the Spottiswoode subscription is a Protestant subscription. That it is supported by many Protestants nobody can attempt to deny, but if the hon. and learned Member means to say that it is a subscription established for the particular object of supporting a Protestant faction against the Catholic people, I beg to remark that I see nothing at all to justify that supposition. It may be a Protestant, but it is essentially a defensive fund. The hon. and learned Member for Dublin talked of the clergymen of the Church of England subscribing to this fund, and contrasted their conduct with that of the priests of his Church; but I defy the hon. and learned Member to produce a single instance of tyrannical interference on the part of the Protestant clergy at all similar, or in the least degree analogous, to those acts which are imputed to the clergy of the Catholic Church. If the hon. and learned Member doubts what I am saying, let him refer to the volume of evidence taken before the Intimidation Committee, and the hon. Member will see that from Cornwall to Yorkshire no case has occurred that bears a comparison to the occurrences in Ireland, and that I am fully justified in the statements I make. The object of the subscription entered into was to procure justice for the Protestant constituencies and the Protestant proprietors of Ireland, those constituencies and those proprietors being unable to obtain justice single-handed.

Hon. Members know very well that a landlord in Ireland has been told by his tenants that they could not vote for him because their priest had denounced him from the altar. They know very well that when it was attempted to reinforce the strength of the Protestant constituency in the Registration Courts, some Revising or Assistant Barrister from the Castle of Dublin was easily found to baffle it; and thus they were forced on to their last resource and refuge—to a Committee of this House.

Now, is this a petition which has the downfall of the Catholics for its object? For my part, I think that the facts which have been brought before the notice of the Intimidation Committee perfectly justify the use of the epithets which have been employed in the original circular or manifesto of Mr. Spottiswoode. [*Murmurs.*]

I shall not trouble the House at any length. I do not affect to be insensible to the difficulty of my position, and I shall be very glad to receive indulgence even from the hon. Members opposite. If, however, hon. Gentlemen do not wish to hear me, I will sit down without a murmur.

I shall confine myself to an attempt to bring back the subject to the point which is really at issue. I cannot comprehend why a considerable body of Her Majesty's subjects, respectable not only for their numbers, but for their independence and integrity, should be held up to scorn and odium by the hon. and learned Member for Dublin, for the commission of an act, the legality of which he did not presume to question, of the propriety of which they are as competent judges as that hon. and learned Member, and of which, after what he has himself confessed, the hon. and learned Member ought to be the last to question the delicacy. I have examined the list of contributors as well as the hon. and learned Member for Dublin, and with a more

than ordinary degree of interest, arising from the fact that the town which I represent* has contributed a larger proportion of the fund than any other part of England, and I do not find that the subscribers principally consist of members of the aristocracy. With very few exceptions, they are to be found among the middle classes—men of moderate opinions and of a temperate tone of mind—men, in fact, who seldom step out of the sphere of their private virtues —men, as hon. Gentlemen who have examined these lists must know, who seldom partake of the excitement created by the conflict of parties, and are rarely inflamed by the passions which agitate the political world. I must say that I think it a very strange thing that so large a body of individuals, many of whom are constitutional Reformers, many of whom, until very lately, supported Her Majesty's Government—I must repeat that I consider it would be very hard, very unjust, very impolitic, to appoint a Committee of Inquiry, which would be equivalent to a verdict against these individuals, without first inquiring what were the feelings which induced them to pursue the line of conduct they have adopted. I would remind the House that these individuals, many of whom supported the Reform Bill, may have entertained hopes in reference to the working of that measure, which, like the hopes cherished by some hon. Gentlemen opposite, may have been disappointed. They may have entertained an expectation that nomination would be at an end, that the stain of borough-mongering would be wiped out, and that not a remnant of the system would remain in a Reformed Parliament. But when they found that the stain of borough-mongering assumed a deeper and darker hue, that seats were openly bought and sold, and that a system of intimidation was organised, to which the riots

* Maidstone.

that even under the old system exhibited the more flagrant features of electoral operations, were peaceable—when they found that this was the case, they perhaps thought that it was time to bring matters to a head.

I have but one more observation to make, and I confess I am rather anxious to make that observation, as it will give me the first opportunity which has been afforded me of saying something with respect to her Majesty's Government. [*Renewed murmurs.*]

I wish I could induce the House to give me five minutes. It is not much. I stand here to-night, not formally, but in some degree virtually, as the representative of a considerable number of Members of Parliament. [*Loud laughter.*]

Now, why smile? Why envy me? Why not let me enjoy that reflection, if only for one night? Do you forget that band of 158 new members, that ingenuous and inexperienced band, to whose unsophisticated minds the right hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Spring Rice) addressed himself early in the session, in those dulcet tones of winning pathos which have proved so effective?

I know that considerable misconception exists in the minds of many of that class of Members on the Opposition side of the House in reference to the conduct of her Majesty's Government with respect to elections. I will not taunt the noble Lord opposite with the opinions which are avowed by his immediate followers; but certain views were entertained and certain calculations were made with respect to those elections about the time when the bell of our Cathedral announced the death of our Monarch. We had all then heard of the projects said to be entertained by the Government, and a little accurate information on the subject would be very acceptable, particularly to the new Members on the Opposition side of the House. We had been told

that reaction was a discovery that only awoke derision, that the grave of Toryism was dug, and that the funeral obsequies of Toryism might be celebrated without any fear of its resuscitation, that the much-vilified Peel Parliament was blown to the winds, when Mr. Hudson rushed into the chambers of the Vatican.

I do not impute these sanguine views to the noble Lord himself, for he has subsequently favoured the public with a manifesto, from which it would appear that Toryism cannot be so easily defeated. It was, however, vaunted that there would be a majority of one hundred, which might upon great occasions be expanded to 125 or 130. [Uproar and cries of "*Question.*"] That was the question. We wish to know the simple fact whether, with that majority in the distance, they then thought of an alteration in the Grenville Act, and whether it was then supposed that impartial tribunals might be obtained for the trial of election petitions. [*Renewed murmurs.*]

If hon. Gentlemen think this fair, I will submit. I would not do so to others, that is all. [*Laughter.*] Nothing is so easy as to laugh. I wish before I sit down to show the House clearly their position.

When the House remembers that, in spite of the support of the hon. and learned Member for Dublin and his well-disciplined band of patriots, there was a little shyness exhibited by former supporters of her Majesty's Government—when they recollect the "new loves" and the "old loves," in which so much of passion and recrimination was mixed up, between the noble Tityrus of the Treasury bench and the learned Daphne of Liskeard (Mr. Charles Buller), notwithstanding the *amantium iræ* has resulted, as I had always expected, in the *amoris integratio*, notwithstanding that political duel has been fought, in which more than one

shot was interchanged, but in which recourse was had to the secure arbitrament of blank cartridges—notwithstanding emancipated Ireland and enslaved England, the noble Lord might wave in one hand the keys of St. Peter, and in the other—[*the shouts that followed drowned the conclusion of the sentence.*]

Now, Mr. Speaker, see the philosophical prejudice of man. I would certainly gladly hear a cheer, even though it came from the lips of a political opponent. I am not at all surprised at the reception which I have experienced. I have begun several times many things, and I have often succeeded at last. I will sit down now, but the time will come when you will hear me.

CONFIDENCE IN THE MINISTRY OF VISCOUNT MELBOURNE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MAY 27, 1841.

I RISE to say a few words in reply to the right hon. Gentleman who has just sat down,* with respect to the right hon. Baronet the Member for Tamworth (Sir Robert Peel), and the course of his political conduct. Placed in an age of rapid civilisation and rapid transition, he has adapted the practical character of his measures to the condition of the times. When in power, he has never proposed a change which he did not carry, and when in opposition he never forgot that he was at the head of the Conservative party. He has never employed his influence for factious purposes, and has never been stimulated in his exertions by a disordered desire of obtaining office; above all, he has never carried himself to the opposite benches by making propositions by which he was not ready to abide. Whether in or out of office, the right hon. Baronet has done his best to make the settlement of the new constitution of England work for the benefit of the present time and of posterity.

* Sir John Cam Hobhouse, President of the Board of Control.

The right hon. Gentleman who has just sat down has dilated, with an air of triumph, on a fanciful analogy between the course pursued in discussing constitutional subjects and subjects that are of an official character. Constitutional subjects are open to all; not so matters the facts respecting which are within the cognisance of Ministers only. Every Gentleman in this House is as competent to give his opinion as to constitutional points as a Member of the Privy Council or a Cabinet Minister, but there is not any analogy between questions of a constitutional and of a financial character; for no man unacquainted with the secrets of office can be fully informed as to the resources of the country. The analogy which the right hon. Gentleman has insisted upon is therefore fallacious.

Nor was what was said by the right hon. Baronet (Sir J. C. Hobhouse) respecting the reign of Sir Robert Walpole, more felicitous. I have recently visited the library of the House, and have informed myself of the facts of the history of the time. Sir Robert Walpole, though a Whig, was one of the ablest Ministers this country has ever known, and his followers might derive instruction from contemplating his conduct. [*Cries of* "Question!"]

The question now before the House is this—Is it, or is it not, important that there should be a clear understanding between the representative and the executive bodies? Such is not the language, but the import of the Resolution. What, then, is the duty of a Government placed in the situation of the present servants of the Crown, unsupported as they are by a House of Commons elected under their own auspices? Two former Ministers have been in this predicament—Sir Robert Walpole and Lord North. No man contends that merely because a Government is in a minority in the House of Commons, therefore it ought to

resign. Next to the assumption of power is the responsibility of relinquishing it. The year 1741 was the ominous year in which Sir Robert Walpole was in the condition of the present Prime Minister. A Parliament had been summoned under his own auspices, but his Address to the Crown was importantly amended, for the House of Commons would not sanction the words containing an approbation of the war. Sir Robert Walpole did not resign, because the implied censure related merely to the past. Then followed the choice of Chairman of Election Committees, next in consequence to the nomination of the Speaker; and here Sir Robert Walpole was in a minority of four. Still he did not resign. The Westminster Election came next, and again the majority against the Ministers was four. The House adjourned for the Christmas recess, and when it reassembled, on the 18th of January, a Motion was made on the subject of resignation, but Horace Walpole said, "My father will go on until the business of Government is arrested," and, accordingly, Sir Robert Walpole remained at his post.

What was the case with Lord North, in 1782? He, too, had a Parliament elected under his own auspices, and Mr. Fox brought forward a Motion of general censure on the conduct of the war, by moving for a Committee to inquire into the conduct of the Admiralty. Lord North avoided a majority against him, by refusing to come to a division; but when a similar Motion was brought forward a few days afterwards, the Minister was defeated by a small majority. A few days subsequently, Lord North had a majority of seventeen, and on the celebrated Address for putting an end to the American war, the Minister had a majority of one. On that occasion, Mr. Pitt said that—

"There was not a promise which had not been falsified—that shuffling and trickery pervaded the whole conduct of the Cabinet, and that it was impossible for Parliament to place confidence in such a Ministry."

Yet Lord North would not quit office because he had a majority of one, and he was, nevertheless, acting less in the spirit of the constitution than Sir Robert Walpole, against whom there had been a majority of four, because "the business of Government was arrested." Afterwards, Mr. Fox gave a notice for Wednesday, and promised to bring forward the same Motion on every Wednesday until Lord North retired. In the present instance there is, however, an additional circumstance, which will not be forgotten by the House, or by the country. I refer to the manner in which, for several Sessions, the Government has been carried on in the face of the resistance offered by a large majority in the other House of Parliament. The Reformed House of Commons, proud of its new-fangled existence, and believing that all power would centre in itself, permitted a Minister of State to stigmatise a vote of the House of Lords as "the whisper of a faction." But now the poisoned chalice is returned to their own lips. Those who have treated the House of Lords with insult are now treating the House of Commons with contempt. The fact is, that the Government is too full of that specious Liberalism which they find it convenient periodically to assume; but in attacking aristocratic institutions, it has become the victim of a haughty and rapacious oligarchy. The present is not the first time the Whigs have been placed in this situation, and in the present day they have been obliged to reconstruct the House of Commons, and to conciliate the House of Lords. In one thing they have been consistent—in a systematic slight of our Parliamentary institutions. They now

govern the country, not only in spite of the House of Lords, but in spite of the House of Commons.

What will be the consequence? Is it possible that these "apostles of liberty," as they have been termed, should be found cringing in the antechambers of the palace, and that they now intend to support themselves in office by clandestine and back-stairs influence? For myself, I have not the slightest doubt that those who have twice tampered with the succession, would do so a third time, if the occasion required it.

The President of the Board of Control has given his opponents the consolation of his opinion, that if the present Ministers were removed, there is a prospect that their successors will form a strong Government. The career of her Majesty's present servants has been a singular one; they began by remodelling the House of Commons and insulting the House of Lords; they then assaulted the Church; next the colonial constitutions; afterwards they assailed the municipalities of the kingdom, attacked the rich and the poor, and now, in their last moments, at one fell swoop, make war upon the colonial, commercial, and agricultural interests. Under these circumstances, I see no reason why the party to which I belong should despair, and the right hon. Baronet (Sir Robert Peel), who, according to the President of the Board of Control, is not a great man, and cannot be a great Minister, may have the opportunity of establishing a Government which will have the confidence of the education, the property, and I sincerely believe, the enlightened feeling of the great body of the nation. In that case the prophecy of the right. hon. Gentleman will be falsified.

STATE OF IRELAND.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, FEB. 16, 1844.*

AFTER the course which I took last year, I feel it would be altogether unworthy were I, on the present occasion, to shrink from expressing without reserve the views which I hold on the general question before the House.

* This speech was alluded to, and quoted several times in the debates of last year (1868) by Mr. Bright, Mr. Cardwell, Mr. Gladstone, and others. "There is no injustice at all," said Mr. Gladstone (April 3, 1868), "in referring to the speech of the Prime Minister in 1844, for the plain and simple reason that the right hon. Gentleman has distinctly stated, twice over, in the midst of many apologetic expressions, that the sentiment of that speech was right. Now, what was the sentiment of that speech? I have read it lately, and have not forgotten it. Many hon. Members may have read it, but those who have not have a treat to enjoy. I speak seriously. The right hon. Gentleman disparaged the speech; but a more closely-woven tissue of argument and observation has seldom been known in the debates of this House. The whole of that speech referable to the Church of Ireland may be fairly summed up in the single word 'Destruction.'" A few weeks earlier (March 16, 1868) Mr. Disraeli had thus spoken:—"I have been reminded in the course of this debate of expressions which I used five-and-twenty years ago. I could remind other Gentlemen of expressions they used on the same subject five-and-twenty years ago; but I do not much care for that sort of thing. With reference, however, to that passage, which has been quoted from a speech made by me, I may remark that it appeared to me at the time I made it that nobody listened to it. It seemed to me that I was pouring water upon sand, but it seems now that the water came from a golden goblet. With regard to the passage from that speech, there are many remarks which, if I wanted to vindicate or defend myself, I might legitimately make. * * But I do not care to say it, and I do not wish to say it, because in my conscience the sentiment of that speech was right. It may have been expressed with the heedless rhetoric which I suppose is the appanage of all who sit below the gangway; but in my historical conscience the sentiment of that speech was right."

I will, in the first place, remark upon an observation made by the noble lord the Member for Sunderland (Viscount Howick). The noble Lord has repeated what I believe to be an historical error of the greatest importance in allusion to a fact, a right appreciation of which will, I imagine, throw great light upon the subject, and facilitate the solution of this great political problem—I mean the right government of Ireland.

The noble Lord has mentioned that the grievances of Ireland have existed for more than 300 years, referring to the introduction of the Reformed Religion into that country. The right hon. and learned Member for Devonport, (Sir George Grey), while he equally with the noble Lord has avowed his conviction in the truth of Protestant principles, has alluded to the same circumstance. The natural inference is, that between the introduction of these Protestant principles and the misgovernment of Ireland there is a necessary and an irresistible connexion.

If I were to refer to a period of the history of Ireland when the government of that country approached nearer to the character which the hon. Gentlemen opposite desire, it would be a period by no means so distant as that to which the noble Lord referred. I will take a period only 200 years past—the period immediately preceding the breaking out of the civil war. At that period there was a Parliament in Dublin called by a Protestant King, presided over by a Protestant Viceroy, and at that moment there was a Protestant Established Church in Ireland; yet the majority of the Members of that Parliament were Roman Catholics. The Government was at that time carried on by a Council of State, presided over by a Protestant Deputy, yet many of the members of that Council were Roman Catholics. The municipalities were then full of Roman Catholics. Several of the Sheriffs also were Roman Catholics, and a very con-

siderable number of Magistrates were Roman Catholics. It is, therefore, very evident that it is not the necessary consequence of English connexion—of a Protestant monarchy, or even of a Protestant Church—that this embittered feeling at present exists; nor that that system of exclusion, which either in form or spirit has so long existed, is the consequence of Protestantism.

Since the last discussion upon this subject in the House, a very curious and authentic work has been published, which throws important light on the political and social condition of the people of Ireland at that period. This is the Journal of Sir William Brereton, an English Baronet,* a great Puritan leader, afterwards second in command under Fairfax. He visited Ireland in 1635, a few years before the general Rebellion. He has given us an account of the social and political features of Ireland under a Protestant monarch and under a Protestant Establishment, and which exhibits the most perfect civil and political equality, the government of the country being in general carried on by Roman Catholic subjects. The Oath of Supremacy, the only penal enactment, was then never called for, and this by the special desire of the King. Every corporation was open; and it is mentioned that the author saw a Protestant Judge of Assize carried to his Church by the Popish Mayor of Wexford, who was then carried himself to the Mass-house.†

* *Travels in Holland, the United Provinces, England, Scotland, and Ireland,* MDCXXXIV.—MDCXXXV. *By Sir William Brereton, Bart. Edited by Edward Hawkins, F.S.A. Printed for the Chetham Society.* 1844.

† "The present Mayor, Mr. Mark Cheveu, attended the judges to the church door, and so did the Sheriff of the Shire, both which left them there, and went to mass, which is here tolerated, and publicly resorted unto in two or three houses in this town, wherein are very few Protestants, as appeared by that slender congregation at church where the judges were."—*Sir William Brereton's Travels, p.* 156.

I mention this to show that to attribute the present condition of Ireland to the consequence of Protestantism is an error. Its condition is to be traced, not to Protestantism, but to Puritanism. It is the consequence of that stern system which in this country has destroyed those institutions which we are now all banded together to support. I know it may be said that this social state, which we wish to see revived in Ireland, was immediately followed by the Irish Rebellion. A rebellion against what? Against a Parliament rebelling themselves against their King. That Rebellion in Ireland led to the establishment of a Government of an essentially national character—the Convention of Kilkenny, a body with whom the King of England was more than once in treaty. The King of England, through Glamorgan (afterwards the famous Marquess of Worcester) entered into a treaty for the settlement of Ireland with the Convention of Kilkenny, in the secret articles of which were laid down the principles upon which the pacification of Ireland was then to take place. The secret articles of that Treaty were merely that the Roman Catholics should enjoy the same civil and political equality which they had done previously to the breaking out of the civil war—viz., that they should not be called on to take the oaths of supremacy; and, with reference to the Protestant Church, that there should be a recognized equality between the two Churches. These were the articles which Charles I., by his word of honour, ratified.

It will then be seen that it is not the necessary consequence of our political opinions—it is not a necessary quality of what is called Toryism—that we should look upon the Irish people as strangers to us either in interest or affection: on the contrary, the system of exclusion has

been fostered not by the Tory party—they did not invent the Penal Code.

All I mean by stating these circumstances is, that they should rescue the Conservative party from the untenable position in which hon. Gentlemen suppose it has been placed—that it is part of the heir-loom of their political connexion to look with jealousy on Ireland; on the contrary, we are the natural allies of the Irish people. [*A laugh.*] What! does the noble Lord deny this? Was it the Tory party that introduced the Penal Code? It was not the Tory party that made a factitious aristocracy out of the plunder of the Church. The Penal Code was introduced, and at the same time a new spirit was infused into what is called the Protestant Church of Ireland—a puritanic spirit, and from that moment the Church of Ireland lost all its influence, and then those unfortunate consequences which have ensued had their origin.

I hope I may be permitted to refer to a vote which I gave last Session. I do so, not for a moment supposing that anything individually done by me can be of interest to the House, but because it is important to all that the legitimate character of party connexion should be understood. I have never concealed it, but, on the contrary, have always frankly avowed that I am a party man. I do not consider, as some hon. Gentlemen seem to consider, that party connexion is an unfortunate or corrupt practice. I think that it is the duty of a Member of this House to be a party man. It is a natural and necessary homage to the genius of our Parliamentary constitution. But if we follow a leader, the leader should be prepared to lead. Now, I do not wish captiously to advert to the conduct of any Gentleman upon the Treasury Benches, and I should be particularly sorry to make any animadversions upon the conduct of the right

hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government (Sir Robert Peel); but as the hon. Gentleman who has just addressed the House (Capt. Bernal) has reminded us, and as, by the way, we have been so frequently reminded, it has become a great historical aphorism that Ireland is to be the great difficulty of the Minister. Now, that is an opinion in which I have never shared. I never believed that Ireland would be a great difficulty, because I felt certain that a Minister of great ability and of great power would, when he found himself at the head of a great majority, settle that question. I believed it then; I believe it still. I believe that the right hon. Gentleman will settle the question. For nearly two years after the accession of the right hon. Gentleman to power there was a lull in Irish affairs; I am glad to find it so. I know very well, when the Irish question is again brought forward, a dissolution of all party on that subject must necessarily occur. It is the inevitable consequence of the circumstances under which the right hon. Gentleman entered office, and to which I will not now more particularly advert, because I have on another occasion clearly placed them before the House, and because I am ever disinclined to make captious comments on the conduct of the Government. That dissolution of party ties on the Irish question is, however, a fact, an inevitable consequence. I need not expatiate upon it, because the right hon. Gentleman, in reply to those very comments which I ventured to make last year, instantly admitted that Ireland was no longer a party question. That was the greatest admission ever made by a Minister.

Finding, then, last year, that Ireland was not a party question, forced to give an opinion on Irish affairs, Ireland being in a state of convulsive turbulence, I feel it my duty now to express my opinion that the Government should

arrest that sedition—should, in fact, govern the country; and that they should make up their minds at last to recognise and remedy the cause of that disturbance. It has been urged that Government is watching events—that a resolution requires time. Now I should never have presumed to criticise the conduct of a Government in a position of such difficulty, if they had only announced that they were merely watching events, and were prepared to take steps when they deemed that circumstances were ripe: but is that so? Is there not evidence of distracted councils? Is not one opinion given in one House of Parliament and a contrary opinion given in another? Now, the question not being a party question, I am justified in giving an opinion—an opinion that the turbulence should be put down, and the causes of the turbulence removed.

The subsequent conduct of the Government justifies my course. They have put down the turbulence, and they begin to talk of the necessity of inquiring into its causes. I conceive, then, in the course I adopted that I was justified.

And now, what remedy have they for the causes of this turbulence? Is it as complete or as comprehensive as I desire? Perhaps I may again subject myself to the imputation of new-born zeal for Ireland. Now, zeal is a quality so rare in this House, and I fear in this age and country, that the imputation of new-born zeal is not one that can be very overwhelming. I wish that everybody was equally regenerate.

But I entertain no opinions with respect to Ireland other than those I have always held. The right hon. Baronet, indeed, has mentioned, that in Opposition he has no recollection of hearing any demurs from me on his Irish policy. Now, the only legitimate occasion on which I could express

my opinion as to the principles on which the Irish Government should be carried on, was on the Municipal Corporations. On that subject I, with great reluctance, not only voted against the counsel of the right hon. Baronet, but, knowing that the division might place me with Gentlemen for whom I entertain a most entire respect, but from whom I entirely differ on the subject of the Irish Government, I thought it best, painful as was the effort, not only to vote, but to speak. That was the time when "Justice to Ireland" was raised as a great party cry in this country. The author, or rather the reviver of that cry, is in the House, and will contradict me if I am in error. Justice to Ireland was then said to mean an identity of institutions with England. I believe that to be the greatest fallacy that can be brought forward. I always thought that the greatest cause of misery in Ireland was the identity of institutions with England. Surely we have given them similar institutions more than enough. How can people ask for an identity of institutions when the very primary and most important institution of all, the union of Church and State, is opposed by the Irish people?

When the subject of Municipal Corporations was before the House, I expressed these opinions. I said, that instead of having an identity of institutions, you should get rid of all those English institutions which you have forced upon that country. I then asked the House whether those forced Establishments, those mimetic Corporations, those jobbing Grand Juries, those imitative benches of English magistrates, could be expected to produce beneficial results, and I ventured to lay down as a principle, that the Government of Ireland should be on a system the reverse of England, and should be centralized; that they should have a strong Executive and an impartial Administration.

I beg distinctly to say that I have never changed my principles on Irish policy, or in any other respect. I say this without reservation—at no time, at no place, under no circumstances, have I ever professed any other principles than those I now maintain. They are Tory principles, the natural principles of the democracy of England. They may not be the principles of those consistent Gentlemen whose fathers bled in England for Charles I., and who now would support in Ireland the tyranny established by Oliver Cromwell. They certainly are not the Tory principles of those who would associate Toryism with restricted commerce and with a continual assault on the liberty of the subject. But they are Tory principles, such as I find them in the pages of eminent writers; such as they were practised, at happy epochs in the history of this country, by eminent statesmen. They may be opinions now very feebly advocated, feebly supported in this House, ill understood at this moment in the country; but they are principles which have made the country great, and which I believe can alone keep the country great.

I give the noble Lord opposite, who laughs, every credit for his principles, because they also are principles with an ascertained and avowed object; they are Whig principles—the natural principles of the aristocracy of the country. I oppose them, but I respect them: they have produced great men and great deeds. Whether or no there be, as we are told, a happy *via media* between Whiggism and Toryism, the principles of which are not so apparent, time perhaps may prove. I am content to tread in the old path—the natural way, I repeat, of the democracy of England.

I had no idea that the Tory party should be always regarded as the tyrants of Ireland; I had no idea that they should be looked upon as those who have treated the Irish

as serfs and slaves—the authors of their confiscations and of their penal laws. It is not so. Let us forget two centuries of political conduct for which Toryism is not responsible; let us recur to the benignant policy of Charles I.; then we may settle Ireland with honour to ourselves, with kindness to the people, and with safety to the realm. At every period when Tory politics and Tory statesmen have succeeded in breaking through the powerful trammels of Whig policy, you will invariably observe that there has been a hope for Ireland, a streak of light observable in its gloomy horizon. Did not Mr. Pitt, the last of Tory statesmen, propose measures for the settlement of Ireland, which, had they been agreed to by Parliament, would have saved Ireland from her present condition? You would have had the Roman Catholics of Ireland emancipated at a very early period, and you would have had the Church Question, too, settled at a very early period; and it will, in my mind, still be settled at a very early period; and it will be settled, I have no doubt, upon principles analogous to those which were laid down by a great statesman in 1636. If we want permanently to settle Irish affairs with credit to ourselves, and to the satisfaction of the Irish people, we must reconstruct the social system of that country; and we must commence by organising a very comprehensive and pervading Executive. When we have done this, and got the administration of justice into our hands, we should, perhaps, find a less necessity for legislation for Ireland than has been considered requisite.

With regard to the proposal of the noble Lord, if the noble Lord or any other hon. Member come forward with a comprehensive plan which would certainly settle the question of Ireland, no matter what the sacrifice might be, I would support it, though I might afterwards feel it necessary

to retire from Parliament, or to place my seat again at the disposal of my constituency. But I confess I have no apprehension of that. I have the honour to represent the oldest Tory constituency in the country, and I have already succeeded in weeding from their minds some most inveterate Whig prejudices. Last year, for example, when I was told that I had lost my seat because I had supported the right hon. Gentleman's Tariff, I went down to see my friends in the country, and explained the history of England to them; and I can assure the House that after that they took the most enlightened views upon the subject, and were proud to recur to old Tory principles of commerce.

That reminds me that I do not at all understand the new morality of the House of Commons, when Gentlemen say: "It is extremely desirable to do so and so; but it is so very difficult; and then there are prejudices—what are we to do against prejudices?" Why, everything great is difficult. In 1832, when everybody said that the right hon. Gentleman's party was smashed, and that he was a doomed man, it was thought that nothing could be more difficult than to reconstruct the right hon. Gentleman's party. But the right hon. Gentleman looked about him and set to work like a man. Well, there was a difficult thing—a very difficult thing — to reconstruct a Conservative party after a revolution; but it was done, and done well. But there were prejudices to be removed, too, in that case—the prejudices of very eminent personages; but that was done too, with time and resolution; and there sits the right hon. Baronet at this moment, with a Secretary of State on each side of him, whose prejudices he has succeeded most effectually in removing. They are colleagues of whom the right hon. Gentleman may well be proud, and it is a most

encouraging circumstance that he should have succeeded so readily in removing prejudices.

I do not think it is more difficult to reconstruct the social system of Ireland than to reconstruct a party destroyed by a revolution; nor do I think it a more arduous task to remove the prejudices of those who think very little upon a subject than of those who think a great deal. I must protest against that false and cowardly delicacy which prevents Gentlemen from advancing questions which they deem of paramount importance, lest they should offend existing prejudices. I think it is the duty of every Member of this House, if he has a great truth to advance, that he should face prejudice; doubly is it the duty of every member who is the leader of a party; and trebly of him who is at once both the leader of a party and the Minister of the Crown. I have no doubt, if the right hon. Baronet brought forward any proposition which would settle a great question, and would appeal to the people of this country, that he would be supported. All the right hon. Baronet would have to do would be, what public men do not seem to think they have the power of doing, to create public opinion instead of following it; to lead the public, instead of always lagging after and watching others. We hear a great deal of Reform Associations, of Anti-Corn-Law Leagues, Roman Catholic and Repeal Associations, Birmingham Unions, and other combinations of that kind; now, these things are merely the consequence of the people taking the Government of the country into their own hands, because the Government will not administer matters themselves. Opinions are afloat, the public mind is agitated, and no one who is in authority comes forward to lead the people: as the natural consequence of such neglect they coalesce together, and carry their own crude notions into effect; because nothing

is clearer than this—that if the Government do not lead the people, the people will drive the Government. The time is gone by when a Minister can with safety substitute the fulfilment of the duties of office for the performance of the functions of Government.

With regard to the immediate question before the House, I cannot vote for the noble Lord, for this most explicit and frank reason—that I do not see that the noble Lord offers more than Her Majesty's Ministers. They offer a great deal for them, for men who do not pretend to offer much. But for the noble Lord, who made a most spirited and animated speech, and in that truly heroic vein which always distinguishes him when fighting against odds—what does he offer? The noble Lord offers a little thing in a great way. This is not what I wish. I want to see a public man come forward and say what the Irish question is. One says it is a physical question; another, a spiritual. Now, it is the absence of the aristocracy; now the absence of railroads. It is the Pope one day, potatoes the next. Let us consider Ireland as we should any other country similarly situated, in our closets. Then we shall see a teeming population, which, with reference to the cultivated soil, is denser to the square mile than that of China; created solely by agriculture, with none of those sources of wealth which are developed with civilisation; and sustained consequently upon the lowest conceivable diet, so that in case of failure they have no other means of subsistence upon which they can fall back. That dense population in extreme distress inhabit an island where there is an Established Church which is not their Church; and a territorial aristocracy, the richest of whom live in distant capitals. Thus you have a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church;

and, in addition, the weakest Executive in the world. That is the Irish question.

Well, now, what would hon. Gentlemen say if they were reading of a country in that position? They would say at once—"The remedy is revolution." But the Irish cannot have a revolution; and why? Because Ireland is connected with another and a more powerful country. Now, what is the consequence? The connexion with England thus becomes the cause of the present state of Ireland. If the connexion with England prevents a revolution, and a revolution be the only remedy, England logically is in the odious position of being the cause of all the misery in Ireland.

What, then, is the duty of an English Minister? To effect by his policy all those changes which a revolution would do by force. That is the Irish question in its integrity. It is quite evident that to effect this we must have an Executive in Ireland which shall bear a much nearer relation to the leading classes and characters of the country than it does at present. There must be a much more comprehensive Executive, and then, having produced order, the rest is a question of time. There is no possible way by which the physical condition of the people can be improved by Act of Parliament.

The moment you have a strong Executive, a just administration, and ecclesiastical equality, you will have order in Ireland, and the improvement of the physical condition of the people will follow—not very rapidly, perhaps, and we must not flatter ourselves that it will—but what are fifty years even in the history of a nation? But I will say, if these recommendations are adopted, that in fifty years hence the men who shall succeed the present generation in Parliament will find the people of Ireland a contented and thriving peasantry. I do not believe that this object will be carried

by the personage whom the hon. Member for Belfast calls Louis Philippe, meaning, I suppose, the King of the French. I look to no foreign, no illegitimate influences for bringing about that result—not to the passions of the Irish people, not to the machinations of their demagogues, not to the intrigues of distant nations, but to a power far more influential, far more benignant—a power more recently risen in the world, not yet sufficiently recognised—[*Mr. Ward:* "What, Young England?"] No, not Young England, but a power which Young England respects—that irresistible law of our modern civilization which has decreed that the system which cannot bear discussion is doomed.

CONCLUSION OF A SPEECH ON THE REPEAL OF THE CORN LAWS.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS, MAY 15, 1846.

SIR, I am not one of those who, here or elsewhere, in public or in private, have spoken with that disrespect which some have done, of that great commercial Confederation which now exercises so great an influence in this country. Though I disapprove of their doctrines—though I believe from the bottom of my heart that their practice will eventually be as pernicious to the manufacturing interest as to the agricultural interest of this country, still I admire men of abilities who, convinced of a great truth, and proud of their energies, band themselves together for the purpose of supporting it, and come forward, devoting their lives to what they consider to be a great cause. Sir, this country can only exist by free discussion. If it is once supposed that opinions are to be put down by any other means, then, whatever may be our political forms, liberty vanishes. If we think the opinions of the Anti-Corn-Law League are dangerous—if we think their system is founded on error, and must lead to confusion—it is open in a free country like England for men who hold opposite

ideas to resist them with the same earnestness, by all legitimate means—by the same active organisation, and by all the intellectual power they command.

But what happens in this country? A body of gentlemen, able and adroit men, come forward, and profess contrary doctrines to those of these new economists. They place themselves at the head of that great popular party who are adverse to the new ideas, and professing their opinions, they climb and clamber into power by having accepted, or rather by having eagerly sought the trust. It follows that the body whom they represent, trusting in their leaders, not unnaturally slumber at their posts. They conclude that their opinions are represented in the State. It was not for us, or the millions out of the House, to come forward and organise a power, in order to meet the hostile movements of the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden). No, we trusted to others—to one who by accepting, or rather by seizing that post, obtained the greatest place in the country, and at this moment governs England. Well, Sir, what happens? The right hon. Gentleman, the First Minister, told his Friends that he had given them very significant hints of the change of his opinions. He said that even last year, Lord Grey had found him out, and he was surprised that we could have been so long deluded.

Sir, none of the observations of the right hon. Gentleman applied to me. More than a year ago, I rose in my place, and said that it appeared to me that protection was in about the same state as Protestantism was in 1828. I remember my Friends were very indignant with me for that assertion; but they have since been so kind as to observe that instead of being a calumny, it was only a prophecy. But I am bound to say, from personal experience, that, with the very humble exception to which I have referred, I think the right

hon. Baronet may congratulate himself on his complete success in having entirely deceived his party, for even the noble Lord, the Member for Lynn (Lord George Bentinck) himself, in a moment of frank conversation, assured me that he had not till the very last moment the slightest doubt of the right hon. Gentleman. The noble Lord, I suppose, like many others, thought that the right hon. Gentleman was, to use a very favourite phrase on these benches in 1842, "only making the best bargain for them." I remember, when the Whig budget was rejected, and the right hon. Gentleman was installed into office, the changes which he proposed at the time created some suspicion; but all suspicion was hushed at the moment, because the right hon. Gentleman was looked upon as the man who could make the "best bargain" for the party. I want to know what Gentlemen think of their best bargain now? Suddenly, absolute as was the confidence in the right hon. Gentleman, the announcement was made that there was to be another change; that was to occur under his auspices, which, only a few months before, he had aptly described as a "social revolution." And how was that announcement made? Were hon. Gentlemen called together, or had the influential Members of either House any intimation given to them of the nature of it? No, sir. It was announced through the columns of a journal, which is always careful never to insert important information except on the highest authority. Conceive the effect of that announcement on foreign countries, and on foreign Ministers. I can bear witness to it. I happened to be absent from England at the time, and I know of great potentates sending for English ambassadors, and demanding an explanation; and of English ambassadors waiting on great potentates, and officially declaring that there was not the slightest truth in the announcement.

And all this time, too, Members of the Government—I have some of them in my eye—were calling on other newspapers devoted to the Government, and instructing them to announce that the whole was an "infamous fabrication." How ingenuous was the conduct of Her Majesty's Government, or of that Minister who formed the omnipotent minority of the Cabinet, I leave the House to decide. But was it not strange, that, after so much agitation, after all these schemes, after all these Machiavellian manœuvres, when the Minister at last met the House and his party, he acted as if we had deserted him, instead of his having left us? Who can forget those tones? Who can forget that indignant glance?

"Vectabor humeris tunc ego inimicis eques
Meæque terra cedet insolentiæ;"*

which means to say, "I, a Protectionist Minister, mean to govern England by the aid of the Anti-Corn-Law League. And as for the country Gentlemen, why I snap my fingers in their face." Yet even then the right hon. Gentleman had no cause to complain of his party. It is very true that, on a subsequent occasion, two hundred and forty Gentlemen recorded their sense of his conduct. But then he might have remembered the considerable section of converts that he obtained even in the last hour. Why, what a compliment to a Minister—not only to vote for him, but to vote for him against your opinions, and in favour of opinions which he had always drilled you to distrust. That was a scene, I believe, unprecedented in the House of Commons. Indeed, I recollect nothing equal to it, unless it be the conversion of the Saxons by Charlemagne, which is the only historical incident that bears any parallel to that illustrious

* *Hor. Epod.* xvii., 74, 75.

occasion. Ranged on the banks of the Rhine, the Saxons determined to resist any further movement on the part of the great Cæsar; but when the Emperor appeared, instead of conquering he converted them. How were they converted? In battalions—the old chronicler informs us they were converted in battalions, and baptized in platoons. It was utterly impossible to bring these individuals from a state of reprobation to a state of grace with a celerity sufficiently quick. When I saw the hundred and twelve fall into rank and file, I was irresistibly reminded of that memorable incident on the banks of the Rhine. And now, Sir, I must say, in vindication of the right hon. Gentleman, that I think great injustice has been done to him throughout these debates. A perhaps justifiable misconception has universally prevailed. Sir, the right hon. Gentleman has been accused of foregone treachery—of long-meditated deception—of a desire unworthy of a great statesman, even if an unprincipled one—of always having intended to abandon the opinions by professing which he rose to power. Sir, I entirely acquit the right hon. Gentleman of any such intention. I do it for this reason, that when I examine the career of this Minister, which has now filled a great space in the Parliamentary history of this country, I find that for between thirty and forty years, from the days of Mr. Horner to the days of the hon. Member for Stockport, that right hon. Gentleman has traded on the ideas and intelligence of others. His life has been one great appropriation clause. He is a burglar of others' intellect. Search the index of Beatson, from the days of the Conqueror to the termination of the last reign, there is no statesman who has committed political petty larceny on so great a scale. I believe, therefore, when the right hon. Gentleman undertook our cause on either side of the House, that he was perfectly sincere

in his advocacy; but as, in the course of discussion, the conventionalisms which he received from us crumbled away in his grasp, feeling no creative power to sustain him with new arguments, feeling no spontaneous sentiments to force upon him conviction, reduced at last to defending the noblest cause, one based on the most high and solemn principles, upon the "burdens peculiar to agriculture"—the right hon. Gentleman, faithful to the law of his nature, imbibed the new doctrines, the more vigorous, bustling, popular and progressive doctrines, as he had imbibed the doctrines of Mr. Horner—as he had imbibed the doctrines of every leading man in this country, for thirty or forty years, with the exception of the doctrine of Parliamentary Reform, which the Whigs very wisely led the country upon, and did not allow to grow sufficiently mature to fall into the mouth of the right hon. Gentleman. Sir, the right hon. Gentleman tells us that he does not feel humiliated. Sir, it is impossible for any one to know what are the feelings of another. Feeling depends upon temperament; it depends upon the idiosyncracy of the individual; it depends upon the organization of the animal that feels. But this I will tell the right hon. Gentleman, that though he may not feel humiliated, his country ought to feel humiliated. Is it so pleasing to the self-complacency of a great nation, is it so grateful to the pride of England, that one who, from the position he has contrived to occupy, must rank as her foremost citizen, is one of whom it may be said, as Dean Swift said of another Minister, that "he is a Gentleman who has the perpetual misfortune to be mistaken!" And, Sir, even now, in this last scene of the drama, when the party whom he unintentionally betrayed is to be unintentionally annihilated—even now, in this the last scene, the right hon. Gentleman, faithful to the law of his being, is

going to pass a project which, I believe it is matter of notoriety, is not of his own invention. It is one which may have been modified, but which I believe has been offered to another Government, and by that Government has been wisely rejected. Why, Sir, these are matters of general notoriety. After the day that the right hon. Gentleman made his first exposition of his scheme, a Gentleman well known in this House, and learned in all the political secrets behind the scenes, met me, and said, "Well, what do you think of your chief's plan?" Not knowing exactly what to say, but taking up a phrase which has been much used in the House, I observed, "Well, I suppose it's a 'great and comprehensive' plan." "Oh!" he replied, "we know all about it! It was offered to us! It is not his plan; it's Popkins's plan!" And is England to be governed by "Popkins's plan?" Will he go to the country with it? Will he go with it to that ancient and famous England that once was governed by statesmen—by Burleighs and by Walsinghams, by Bolingbrokes and by Walpoles, by a Chatham and a Canning—will he go to it with this fantastic scheming of some presumptuous pedant? I will not believe it. I have that confidence in the common sense, I will say the common spirit of our countrymen, that I believe they will not long endure this huckstering tyranny of the Treasury Bench—these political pedlars that bought their party in the cheapest market, and sold us in the dearest.

I know, Sir, that there are many who believe that the time is gone by when one can appeal to those high and honest impulses that were once the mainstay and the main element of the English character. I know, Sir, that we appeal to a people debauched by public gambling—stimulated and encouraged by an inefficient and short-sighted Minister. I know that the public mind is polluted with

economic fancies; a depraved desire that the rich may become richer without the interference of industry and toil. I know, Sir, that all confidence in public men is lost. But, Sir, I have faith in the primitive and enduring elements of the English character. It may be vain now, in the midnight of their intoxication, to tell them that there will be an awakening of bitterness; it may be idle now, in the spring-tide of their economic frenzy, to warn them that there may be an ebb of trouble. But the dark and inevitable hour will arrive. Then, when their spirit is softened by misfortune, they will recur to those principles that made England great, and which, in our belief, can alone keep England great. Then, too, perchance they may remember, not with unkindness, those who, betrayed and deserted, were neither ashamed nor afraid to struggle for the "good old cause"—the cause with which are associated principles the most popular, sentiments the most entirely national—the cause of labour—the cause of the people—the cause of England.

NATIONAL REPRESENTATION.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, JUNE 20, 1848.

[This speech was delivered on the first evening of the Debate on Mr. Hume's Motion, "That this House, as at present constituted, does not fairly represent the population, the property, or the industry of the country, whence has arisen great and increasing discontent in the minds of a large portion of the people; and it is therefore expedient, with a view to amend the national representation, that the elective franchise shall be so extended as to include all householders; that votes shall be taken by ballot; that the duration of Parliaments shall not exceed three years, and that the apportionment of Members to population shall be made more equal." The previous speakers were Mr. Henry Drummond and Lord John Russell against, and Mr. W. J. Fox for the Motion.]

SIR, the best answer to the animated Address of the hon. Gentleman (Mr. Fox) is the Resolution of the Member for Montrose. The hon. Gentleman has avowed himself to-night the advocate of those whom he describes as serfs. But I cannot find in the Resolution of the hon. Member for Montrose that he is prepared to enfranchise those serfs. The speech of the hon. Gentleman refers to a class of men the circumstances of whose lives, as he describes them, are, in my opinion, extremely imaginary. But whether they are real, or whether they are imaginary, no one can suppose for a moment that the project of the hon. Member for Montrose is one that at all provides the means

of alleviating or of elevating their condition in the social or political scale. Whatever may be the prejudices of the hon. Gentleman against the £10 elector, the proposition of the hon. Member for Montrose is not one that will enfranchise poets sleeping under hedges. That is not the proposition of the hon. Gentleman. And however comprehensive may be the sympathies of the hon. Member for Oldham (Mr. Fox), I cannot understand how, entertaining those opinions, and animated by those feelings, he can find it his duty to take so prominent a part in this Debate—I mean as to the moment he has risen in it: how, with those opinions, he can avow himself the friend of a project, which would seem rather to increase the difficulties of those classes whose interests he advocates, by raising up barriers to their hopes, and which marks them out as unworthy of the new privileges which are to be accorded. With respect to the proposition itself, or similar ones, the Gentlemen who sit upon this side of the House are in a very different position to that of the hon. Gentleman and his supporters, or the Members of Her Majesty's Government. It is not for us, Sir, either to defend or attack the Reform Act. We obey it. When it was first brought forward, it encountered the criticism of those who were opposed to His Majesty's Ministers in 1832. Perhaps it benefited in some degree by that opposition. But when it had passed—when it became the law of the country—it received from us that allegiance which the law in this country always commands; and no doubt the remedial and practical sense of this country has prevented some of those evils which were then anticipated.

But, Sir, when I say that we neither defend nor attack the Reform Act, I cannot myself believe that in an age like the present, when a Motion like that of the hon. Member

for Montrose is brought forward, it is consistent with our duty—with the position we occupy with regard to our constituents and the country—and as the representatives of the party who originally were the opponents of the change of 1832—I do not think it is consistent with our duty that we should evade the difficulties of this debate; and some there are who think it is one not unfruitful of difficulty. Therefore I wish to take this opportunity, if the House will allow me, and at this hour, with as much brevity as I can command, to make some observations on the project which has been brought forward with so much preparation—which has been so sedulously prepared, but the true character of which I believe is not yet accurately appreciated, and which certainly seems not to be understood by the eloquent advocate we have just heard, who is prepared to enfranchise imaginary serfs and popular poets. Now, Sir, the hon. Gentleman towards the close of his address told us that he was the advocate of fiscal reform. The hon. Gentleman who introduced this project dwelt but slightly on that topic. Yet I have watched with attention, and read with an observation of no careless character, the proceedings that have been conducted by the hon. Gentleman and by his friends at the meetings they have called, and the resolutions they have offered for the consideration of those assembled: and I have always found that, on every occasion, financial and fiscal reform has been most sedulously brought forward, and that the principal plea for Parliamentary reconstruction and political revolution has always been the increase in the expenditure and taxation of the country under the system that exists; and I had occasion this afternoon to listen to a great number of petitions that were presented, and I found the same tone pervade the whole of them. The same echo had been caught by all: they all assumed the increased ex-

penditure of the Government, and the enormous and increased amount of taxation of the country; and these were the causes—these were the pleas—at the popular meetings, in the popular resolutions, and the popular speeches, of the hon. Gentleman and the new party, that were brought forward as the basis and principal reason for political changes. I want to know what is the reason that to-night we have heard so little of fiscal and financial reform.

Now, Sir, I can easily understand why the hon. Gentleman who has just addressed the House did not dwell on that subject. The hon. Gentleman is a master of statistics, but of statistics of a different kind from those we are accustomed to in this House—very important, very interesting, no doubt—the amount of penny publications, the great increase in cheap literature, the development of railway intellect, and of all those productions you may find at the terminus or the station—circumstances in the age highly deserving of consideration, and which would not escape the observation of any sensible man. Still, these are not the statistics that touch the question of fiscal and financial reform, of which we have heard so much, and which are the real pleas, and were the popular pleas, of this movement and this new party, and which I wish to see clearly placed before the House, and before those measures for which they were the pleas are brought under our consideration. Now, Sir, I reserve to myself—with the permission of the House, and with as much brevity as I can command—I reserve to myself the right of giving my opinion upon these measures, whatever I may think of the fallacy or truth of those pleas. But I think the House will agree with me, that after all England has for months been told, that there has been in this country an enormous increase of taxation, and an enormous increase in the expenditure of the Government—

told this, too, at a period of general suffering and general disturbance—told to the people of this country in order to impress upon them that there ought, as there had been changes in other countries, to be a change here, in consequence of our oppressive taxation and the oppressive expenditure of our Government—it is of some importance that, in a Debate like the present, this House and the country should clearly understand whether those pleas are true or not. I give the hon. Member for Montrose and his friends the benefit of this full admission, that whether those pleas be true or not—however those circumstances may affect the position of himself and his friends in this controversy — they are circumstances which do not affect the abstract excellence or necessity of his measures.

Now, Sir, one word as to the enormous increase of taxation in this country, which is the principal reason for a change in our Parliamentary constitution. I shall not at midnight refer, except by memory, to any documents; but the facts to which I allude are so well authenticated that I speak in the presence of many who, in a moment, can confute me if I make any great mistake. I take the period of twenty years ago—a little prior to the passing of the Reform Bill. The revenue that was raised in this country, in 1828, from our ordinary sources, was forty-nine and a half millions in round numbers. The same revenue raised in 1848—that is, twenty years afterwards — was forty-seven and a half millions. How is it possible, then, that the hon. Gentleman can maintain the position that taxation in this country has oppressively increased? But the revenue of 1828 was not only two millions greater from our ordinary sources—of course I omit the Income-tax, which does not touch the working classes—than the revenue raised in 1848, but the revenue in 1828 was raised from a population, in round

numbers, of less than twenty-three millions, while the same revenue in 1848 was raised from a population of thirty millions. Why, Sir, if you only calculate per head the burden of taxation of these two periods, you will find, I think, that in 1828 the people of England were taxed something like £2 3s. 2d. a head; and, in 1848, £1 12s. 2d. These figures measure the difference of the proportion borne by the annual taxation imposed by the State to the general fund out of which it is paid; and this on the assumption that the annual wealth of the country has increased in a ratio equal to the population. But we all know, and no man can be ignorant of it, for the documents are upstairs, that the annual wealth of the country has increased in a greater ratio than the population. Well then, Sir, what becomes of the plea for political change founded on an oppressive increase of taxation under the existing system? But it is not only true that taxation per head in this country in 1848, as compared with twenty years ago, has been considerably reduced in amount, but there is another circumstance of deep importance which ought never to be forgotten—that there has been a great redistribution of taxation—that the amount raised has been redistributed—and in every instance the alteration has been effected in favour of the working classes of this country. Sir, I have a return here, but I think I can trust my memory as to its results. The Customs for the years 1827 and 1847—which two years were the financial years of 1828 and 1848—the Customs of 1827 amounted to £18,000,000, and they barely exceeded £18,000,000 in 1847. The Excise was £18,500,000 in 1827, and it was less than £12,000,000 in 1847. The Stamps and Taxes are the same in both years; but in the Post Office, there has been a vast change and an immense reduction in favour of those classes who were

suffering from fiscal oppression; so that, between the two periods of 1847 and 1827, there has been a redistribution of taxation to the amount of more than seven millions in favour of the working classes, to say nothing of the diminished burthen of the amount left from the great increase in population, in commerce, and in national wealth.

Now, Sir, I mention these facts—I think I heard somebody cry 'Question!'—these are certainly not details very agreeable at past midnight; but, after all, it is the business of the case. We are told that in this country there is a system of such oppressive taxation, and of Government expenditure so enormous and increasing, that it is necessary to have reform. I do not say that it is not necessary to have reform. I will enter fairly into that question. But do not let us enter upon this great question upon false pretences. The rate of our Government expenditure during the last twenty years, notwithstanding the immense increase in our population and wealth, has been almost stationary. The amount of taxation has been stationary. Well, then, the pleas for reform on these grounds are not true. The pleas that have been to-night repeated *ad nauseam* in every petition, are utterly fallacious and false. Now, Sir, I again admit, however those pleas may affect the character of those who urge them, they do not affect the nature of the measures proposed. Let us examine those measures. We are asked, in the first place, to increase the suffrage. I listened with great attention to the hon. Member for Montrose, and I certainly expected to hear from the hon. Gentleman some principle laid down upon which the franchise was to be extended, and that in asking us to consent to a great change —as far as the present argument, I am not now denying that a change may be necessary, that point I am perfectly prepared to enter into—but I say the hon. Gentleman who

proposes the change, ought to lay down some principle on which that change shall be founded. The hon. Gentleman, as far as I could gather, laid down the principle that an Englishman had a right to a vote. That really was the point of his speech. He talked afterwards of not confounding constitutional rights with the rights of man; he did not condescend to show what the difference between constitutional rights and the rights of man might be, but he said that every subject of the Queen had a right to vote. I want to know, if an Englishman has a right to vote, why is it necessary that he should have a qualification for that vote—why that qualification should be the circumstance of living in a house? The hon. Gentleman also says, every voter should be of age—of legal age. He says, a man may be called out for the militia at eighteen years of age; and therefore, from that, I infer that every man at twenty-one years of age has a right to vote. But the hon. Gentleman's illustration disagrees with his principle; because, if a man has a right to vote at twenty-one years of age, I want to know, if he is to be summoned for the militia at eighteen, why he should not be entitled to vote at that age? The hon. Gentleman talks of legal age. What has legal age to do with the working classes? And what has legal age to do with any class in the country? The commander of the escort of guards to Her Most Gracious Majesty may be, and often is, not more than eighteen years of age. The hon. Gentleman has properly reminded us that every man is bound to serve in the militia before he is of legal age; and, I believe, even school-boys must join the *posse comitatus*.

Well: bear in mind that the hon. Gentleman, in proposing this great change, has laid down no principle whatever. I myself cannot understand, if you assume an abstract right to vote, where the line can be drawn. I observe that, in a

debate that recently took place, not only in another place but in another country, on the suffrage, some ridicule was occasioned by a gentleman advocating the rights of the other sex to the suffrage; but, as far as mere abstract reason is concerned, I should like to see anybody in this House, who is a follower of the hon. Gentlemen, get up and oppose that claim. I say that in a country governed by a woman—where you allow women to form part of the other estate of the realm—Peeresses in their own right, for example—where you allow a woman not only to hold land, but to be a lady of the manor and hold legal courts—where a woman by law may be churchwarden—I do not see, where she has so much to do with State and Church, on what reasons, if you come to right, she has not a right to vote.*

All this proves that right has nothing to do with the matter: the very plan of the hon. Gentleman is a plan that at once disfranchises millions, even of those adult males of whom we have heard so much. Other Gentlemen have stated that the suffrage is a trust. I do not wish to take refuge in that very vague and somewhat canting phrase. I do not look upon the suffrage as a trust any more than a right. It is what everything in England is—a privilege. It is created by law, as everything in England is created; and the characteristic of our society has been that it has always held out privilege, not as an odious exception, but as a general reward. This brings us to the real character of this House, and the political order of which we are the representatives. We represent the Commons; the Commons are an estate of

* When Mr. Disraeli made these remarks he probably little dreamt that the idea which seemed to him then a *reductio ad absurdum*—the right of women to the franchise—would twenty years later be seriously advocated in Parliament, as it was lately, by Mr. John Stuart Mill, when he sat as Member for Westminster.—ED.

the realm. The materials of that estate constitute, of course, a question of policy—of expediency—and it is perfectly open to anybody, at any time, to discuss the question of what that order should consist. It is an order, whether you make it consist of thousands, of hundreds of thousands, or even of two or three millions—it becomes an order and a privileged order; and for the hon. Gentleman to pretend that he is settling a great question for ever, by proposing that every man who lives in a house should have a vote is an absurdity, because the very supporter of the Motion, on his own side, who has made an eloquent speech in favour of it, has argued throughout that there should be no limitation whatever assigned to the exercise of the suffrage.

I ventured to say before, that Gentlemen around me are not responsible for the Reform Bill. But the Reform Bill was a reconstruction of the order of the Commons—of our estate of the realm. It was a settlement most unsatisfactory to us—we offered our objections to it, and got pelted for our pains. But no one can pretend that settlement was not carried with the full support and sanction of the people of England; and if the question of its passing had been submitted to universal suffrage, there is not the slightest doubt that at the moment all would have registered their votes for the Bill. No other plan was desired or tolerated. It was to be something neither more or less. What you wanted was not only the Bill, but the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill—and you got it. You were told at the time that the first critics of the Reform Bill would be the Reformers themselves; and no prophecy ever was more strikingly fulfilled. But when there has been a settlement of a great question—concluded, too, under such circumstances—the country agitated for two years—yourselves choosing the hour of action—when you had every possible

advantage—when opposition, legitimate, constitutional, and I believe national opposition, was entirely overcome by the energy and artifices of your triumphant faction—when you yourselves laid it down as a great apophthegm that became a household word, that you would have it and nothing else—it is not unreasonable that we, who agreed to it with reluctance, or that the Whig party, the Government of the day, who brought it forward after mature consideration, should say before we disturb the settlement then made—'Let us be sure that we are arriving at a new reconstruction that offers a fair prospect of giving satisfaction to the people and security to the State.' I speak, not from egotism, for myself on this subject; for one naturally wishes, on such subjects, not to draw any one into responsibility for one's expressions. I, for one, am no advocate for finality. I conceive there may be circumstances—there may be a period, when we shall do that which we have done for five hundred years in this country—reconstruct the estate of the Commons. But I contend that the last reconstruction—and it is rather a recent one, however unsatisfactory to the hon. Gentleman and his Friends—is likely to be more satisfactory to the nation than the plan brought forward by the hon. Gentleman; and I am not prepared to support any new plan, any new change, on a subject so important, unless I believe it to be one that will conduce very greatly to the public interest. Certainly, I cannot, in the character of the present plan, discover anything that has a tendency to satisfy the public heart; because you must divest this question of all that rhetorical varnish and that powerful sentiment with which it has been suffused by the hon. Member for Oldham. This is not at all a project to enfranchise the serfs of England—this is not at all a project that tells the labouring classes they shall take their place in the political constitu-

tion of the country. It is characterised by features totally opposed to the principles laid down by the hon. Member for Oldham. If there be any mistake more striking than another in the settlement of 1832—and, in this respect, I differ from the hon. Member for Surrey—it is, in my opinion, that the Bill of 1832 took the qualification of property in too hard and rigid a sense, as the only qualification which should exist in this country for the exercise of political rights. How does the hon. Member for Montrose, the great champion of the new movement, meet this difficulty? He has brought forward a project of which property, and property alone, is the basis: he has not come forward with any scheme for an educational suffrage or an industrial suffrage—he has not attempted in any way to increase or vary the elements of suffrage. It is impossible that any plan can be more hard, more commonplace, more literal, more unsatisfactory, or more offensive, as the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham shows it must be, to the great body of the working classes, than one which recognises property, and property alone, as its basis.

Now, Sir, for one, I think property is sufficiently represented in this House. I am prepared to support the system of 1832 until I see that the circumstances and necessities of the country require a change; but I am convinced that when that change comes, it will be one that will have more regard for other sentiments, qualities, and conditions, than the mere possession of property as a qualification for the exercise of the political franchise. And, therefore, in opposing the measure of the hon. Member for Montrose, I protest against being placed in the category of finality, or as one who believes that no change is ever to take place in that wherein there has been, throughout the history of this ancient country, frequent and continuous change—the con-

struction of this estate of the realm. I oppose this new scheme, because it does not appear to be adapted in any way to satisfy the wants of the age, or to be conceived in the spirit of the times.

I shall touch, on this occasion, but very briefly on the second point of the scheme—the Ballot, which we shall have another opportunity of fully discussing. There cannot be the slightest doubt that, if you adopt this new mode of registering suffrages, you at once effect a very great alteration in the character and habits of the people. That I think a very great evil; unless called for by strong necessity: that, alone, is a strong objection to the change. I do not dwell on the practical considerations with respect to this subject, that if we adopted the Ballot, we probably should not avoid the corruption and intimidation we deprecate. I will not dwell on the experience of the ancient past, or that experience which, on the other side of the Atlantic, is perpetually accruing to us. But, both with respect to the right and the manner of voting—the suffrage and the Ballot—I am surprised that hon. Gentlemen opposite perpetually forget an immense element which, in the discussion of this question, ought never to be omitted, and that is the influence of opinion organised by a free press. That is the best safeguard against corruption and intimidation. You may pass what laws you like; but the ultimate means by which intimidation and corruption will be repressed is by elevating the tone of public feeling, and bringing the influence of public opinion, through the press, to bear upon the conduct of the great body of the nation. It is all folly and nonsense to say that the present age and the present Parliament are distinguished by their corrupt practices. The very reverse is the fact. All Parliaments for the last fifty years have become less and less corrupt. But it is

not your laws that have made them so, so much as the increasing action of public opinion; for, even when you have passed stringent laws, you only did so when they were called for by public opinion, which desired to be expressed in the shape of a legislative enactment. Why, before the American war—a period not yet very remote—the Secretary of the Treasury used to sit at the gangway—just where the hon. Member for Devonport (Mr. Tufnell) is now accustomed to sit—and at a stated period of the Session, the end or the beginning, gave, in the House, to the Members who supported Government, a routine *douceur* of a £500 note; which was as little looked upon as bribery as head-money by a freeman. [A Voice: 'Walpole.'] No, no; much later than Walpole, and quite distinct from secret bribery. It was a practice which the manners of the age and the low tone of public feeling permitted. So, you see how frivolous and unfounded are those reiterated assertions that this House is daily more corrupt, and is growing more and more so every day. The fact is, that it is becoming purer and more pure every day—inevitable in a land of progress like England, where, with a free press and healthy action of public opinion, the undue influence of gold and property must every year, and in each successive Parliament, be diminished.

On the third point, that of triennial Parliaments, I will touch only for a moment. Nobody will venture to maintain that the increase of taxation or the extravagant expenditure of the Government has been in any practical degree occasioned by long Parliaments. Hon. Members are well aware that, during the last twenty years, we have had on an average Parliaments of about that duration which the hon. Member for Montrose advocates. I am the less inclined to say anything against triennial Parliaments, because they are part of

those old Tory principles which I have ever taken every opportunity of promulgating. Are they not? Did not Sir William Wyndham advocate triennial Parliaments against a corrupt Minister? They are a portion of that old Tory creed around which, I am happy to observe more than one indication, the people of this country are well inclined to rally. The only objection to the change is that it is a change, and that in the present position of affairs all unnecessary changes of this kind are to be deprecated. If I found triennial Parliaments established, I would support and retain them. But I can hardly think that any sensible man can believe that Parliaments having legally that tenure of existence, which they now possess virtually, could affect the course of our policy and legislation.

I now come to the fourth point, which is one of considerable importance — that of electoral districts. The hon. Member for Montrose entered into some details on the matter, of which I was not myself ignorant, owing to the courtesy of a Gentleman who, I regret to say, is no longer a Member of this House. I have here the manifesto of the new party on this subject. Sir Joshua Walmsley, in the most obliging manner, placed in my hand this pamphlet, as the acknowledged manifesto of the new party. Giving me credit for that candid disposition which I hope I possess, he concluded that, after reading this important and elaborate document, I should be unable to resist the force of its arguments and its statements. I promised to give the work my most attentive consideration, and I have done so. I should have been happy to have expressed my opinion of the scheme in the public presence of that Gentleman, and thus apprised him of the result of my perusal; but unfortunately that Gentleman, who was sent here to ensure the future purity of Parliament, has from peculiar circumstances of a

contrary character, no longer a seat amongst us. The hon. Member for Montrose, in speaking on this part of the question, rather beat about the bush—he fought somewhat shy of it. He first went into statistical calculations; but then he shuffled out of them, and altogether there was a confusion about his statement which showed the hand of a master in political mystification, who knows how to drape with elegance the naked truth, and when to reserve his revelations. He did not commit himself very positively to any particular view; but I have the accredited manifesto of the party here, and will take leave to call the attention of the House to it, as I think it is calculated to throw more light on the subject than the hon. Member seemed disposed to impart to it. The principle laid down in this document is what the hon. Gentleman only hinted at—namely, that the representation of England should be founded on population. [*Mr. Hume made a remark.*] Exactly: population, as showing the amount of property.

I will show you how that principle works, and you can then decide as to the expediency of the practice. I must myself confess a little mortification on this subject, when the late Member for Leicester called my attention to the county of Buckingham. The county of Buckingham is here set down at a certain rated rental, and a comparison is then sought to be instituted on that head between it and Lancashire. At present Buckinghamshire has eleven Members; but, under the new system, it is to have only four. Now, I am content to take Buckinghamshire to illustrate my views. It is true that the county of Buckingham has a rated rental to the annual value only of £684,000, and that the annual value of the rated property in Lancashire is about five millions, and it only has twenty-six Members. I admit that Buckinghamshire has none of those great towns

which we are told for the future are to govern England. But the county of Buckingham first refused to pay ship-money, the county of Buckingham carried the Grand Remonstrance; and ever since the settlement of our Parliamentary constitution in 1640, of which it was one of the main creators, the county of Buckingham has supplied this House with a series of statesmen than whom no body of men have more contributed to create the empire, sustain the renown, and cherish the high spirit of the English people. [*Laughter.*] You may smile, remembering only the uninfluential person who now addresses you; but I was thinking of those days when the county of Buckingham gave to the House of Commons Mr. Hampden and the Grenvilles, the elder Pitt and Mr. Burke. Why, even at the last reconstruction of this estate of the realm, it was the county of Buckingham that occasioned the enfranchisement of the most numerous class of the new constituency, and not the least reputable. And is it, Sir, to be tolerated that a population which for centuries has been born and bred in the memory and fulfilment of such great deeds as these, should be deprived of their hereditary weight in that free Parliament of which they were themselves among the first originators, because, if told by the head, they may not be equal to the numbers of some great town born in a day, and destined perhaps to vanish in a day? I hear a great deal in the present day about realised capital; but surely, Sir, one of the most important elements in constructing the franchise of an ancient people is the realised experience of a nation. To say that you will, by a stroke of the pen, suddenly deprive of their political position a population which has so worthily exercised its rights, is not only to say that you will bring about a revolution, but very possibly produce a civil war. But how is the new scheme to act?

Now, according to the accredited manifesto of the new party—["No, no!"]—O! political ingratitude, thou art indeed a proverb! I would appeal to the spirit of the defunct Member for Leicester. [*Mr. Hume made a remark to the effect that the pamphlet referred to had been printed before the party was formed.*] Oh! then, it was the origin of your party! Here it is—a most important document—drawn up by Alexander Mackay, Esq., of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-Law. Now, let us see how Manchester is to be represented under the new constitution. Manchester is not so scurvily treated as the county of Buckingham. Under the new constitution, Manchester is to have for Members—how many think you? Seven! Only think of seven Members for Manchester! Why, Sir, from peculiar circumstances, since the days of our dreary opposition, Manchester has virtually, as far as debate is concerned, only had one Member in this House; and, Sir, as far as I am concerned, I must acknowledge it has been found quite difficult enough to keep him in order.* But, Sir, if we are to have seven Members for Manchester—if there are to be seven *Richards* in the field—if it is to be expected that we are to reply to each of them, night after night, and one after another—I at once, anxious as I am to assist and co-operate with my friends, I must plainly say that I shall retire from the arena. The energies necessary for such a contest would be colossal—worthy of the giants of the old days of Parliamentary strife—the Pitts and the Foxes. But we are not only to have seven Members for Manchester, but Liverpool and Glasgow are each to have the same number. Conceive Liverpool and Glasgow each with seven Members, and all,

* The allusion here is to Mr. Bright. The other Member for Manchester (Mr. Milner Gibson) had taken a subordinate office in the Government, and was thus prevented from speaking.—ED.

of course, statistical Members!* Dublin is to have six Members; and, as we always have a petition against the return of a Member for Dublin, and some of our best men —my noble Friend, the Member for Stamford (the Marquis of Granby) among them—are now working on a Dublin Committee, there will, of course, be six Dublin Committees all working at the same time. Then, Birmingham and Leeds are to have each five Members, and Bristol and Sheffield only four. London is to be represented by forty. The new constitution distinctly lays it down that London is entitled to as many Members as the whole of the kingdom of Scotland, on the grounds of population and wealth. The only objection to the new scheme is, that when we have got the men together, the seven Members for Manchester, the seven Members for Glasgow, the forty Members for London, and their comrades, we may certainly have something called a House of Commons; but then, unfortunately, this House of Commons will probably be able neither to govern the country nor themselves. It is easy to form these plans. You may go the full tether of the hon. Member for Oldham, and have universal suffrage at once—for that is the length to which he goes. We have sufficient experience to know — recent experience — that in a country, however civilised, however powerful, however enlightened, you may elect the representatives by universal suffrage, and yet, when they are elected, the country may laugh in their face. That will happen in our national assembly which has happened in the national assembly of a neighbouring country. Sir, as it is the fashion to lay down principles, I say at once that neither in this, nor in any other ancient European country, can there be any such thing as government, which is not

* Alluding to Mr. Macgregor, the Member for Glasgow, whose speeches seem to have been more instructive than lively.—ED.

based upon traditionary influences and large properties, round which men may rally. They are the only security for liberty and property. The Manchester school are always attacking traditionary influences, and intimating that it is their wish to subdivide large properties. Foreseeing, as I do, what the results will be, and convinced that, without traditional influences and large properties, you will find it impossible to govern England, I prefer the liberty we now enjoy to the liberalism they promise, and find something better than the rights of men in the rights of Englishmen.

I have now shown the House, more briefly than I could have wished, the fallacy of the pleas on which the measures proposed to-night are brought forward. I have also offered some suggestions to the House, though necessarily much curtailed, which may perhaps make them hesitate before they will agree that the measures themselves are worthy of their confidence and support. I now briefly, because the hour is very late, will endeavour to show what is the real cause of these measures being brought forward, who bring them forward, and what may be the consequences of their adoption. Notwithstanding all the efforts of the hon. Members for Oldham and Montrose to veneer and varnish their scheme, and however dexterously they may have arranged their concessions, this is a middle-class movement —it is nothing more nor less than an attempt to aggrandize the power of that body of persons who have frankly told us that this is a middle-class Government, and, therefore, that they will take care of their own interests and their own objects. The House will not forget what that class has done in its legislative enterprises. I do not use the term "middle-class" with any disrespect; no one more than myself estimates what the urban population has done for the liberty and civilisation of mankind; but I speak of the

middle-class as of one which avowedly aims at predominance; and therefore it is expedient to ascertain how far the fact justifies a confidence in their political capacity. It was only at the end of the last century that the middle-class rose into any considerable influence, chiefly through Mr. Pitt—that Minister whom they are always abusing. The first great movement in which they succeeded, showing their power over the people out of doors, independent of Parliament, was the abolition of the slave trade—a noble and sublime act—but carried with an entire ignorance of the subject, as the event has proved. How far it has aggravated the horrors of slavery, I stop not now to inquire. I make only one observation upon it with reference to the present subject of debate. The middle class emancipated the negroes; but they never proposed a Ten Hours Bill. So much for that move. The interests of the working classes of England were not much considered in that arrangement. Having tried their hand at colonial reform, by which, without diminishing the horrors of slavery, they succeeded in ruining our colonies—they next turned their hands to Parliamentary reform, and carried the Reform Bill. But observe, in that operation they destroyed, under the pretence of its corrupt exercise, the old industrial franchise, and they never constructed a new one. So much for the interests of the people in their second great legislative enterprise. So that, whether we look to their colonial reform or their Parliamentary reform, they entirely neglected the industrial classes. Having failed in colonial as well as in Parliamentary reform—and I need not show how completely they have failed in Parliamentary reform, for the debate of this night is the perfect proof of that fact—they next tried commercial reform, and introduced free imports under the specious name of free trade. How were the interests of

the working classes considered in this third movement? More than they were in their colonial or their Parliamentary reform? On the contrary, while the interests of capital were unblushingly advocated, the displaced labour of the country was offered neither consolation nor compensation; but was told that it must submit to be absorbed in the mass. In their colonial, Parliamentary, and commercial reforms, there is no evidence of any sympathy with the working classes; and every one of the measures so forced upon the country has, at the same time, proved disastrous. Their colonial reform ruined the colonies and increased slavery. Their Parliamentary reform, according to their own account, was a delusion which has filled the people with disappointment and disgust. If their commercial reform have not proved ruinous, then the picture that has been presented to us of the condition of England every day for the last four or five months must be a gross misrepresentation. In this state of affairs, as a remedy for half a century of failure, we are under their auspices to take refuge in financial reform, which I predict will prove their fourth failure, and one in which the interests of the working classes will be as little considered and accomplished.

The principle of their financial reform is to throw the burthen of taxation on what is called realised property, which they pretend is of a more aristocratic character than other property. Upon a former occasion I took the opportunity of showing the fallacy of this position. I reminded the House, that if the rental of England were equally divided among its proprietors, the average income of the holders of real property in Great Britain is only £170 a year; and as there are many possessing more, so there must be many who have less. Then, with respect to another great branch of realised property—funded property—I also reminded the

House that there are issued as many as fifty thousand dividend warrants for sums less than £5. With regard to house property, I presume there is scarcely any Gentleman present who will doubt that the elements of that species of property must be not less democratic than those of landed and funded estates. Now, suppose a Chancellor of the Exchequer—and it would be a great feat—could transfer 10 per cent. of our taxation from the multitude to what is called realised property—suppose, on the one hundred millions per annum that realised property produces, he could transfer even 20 per cent., what relief would this afford to a people suffering from the want of work and wages? How far would it tend to increase that want of work and wages? I say nothing of the justice of the arrangements, or the equitable contrivance of relieving large commercial capitals from all imposts to the State. I feel warranted in saying that their financial reform will end in the same failure that has attended all their other attempts at reform.

There is one more point to which I must advert before I sit down, and that is the source from which this movement springs. The noble Lord has expressed his belief that this is not a popular movement—that it has not a great array of supporters out of doors; but then the hon. Gentleman the Member for Montrose tells us to look at the petitions. But he assures us, at the same time, that they are all the consequences of a declaration made by the noble Lord that the people of England did not require this reform. Up to that point the Member for Montrose admits that the people had been silent. Surely, the people of this country are not accustomed to wait to express their opinion, till it may chance to be elicited by some captious expression of a Minister of the Crown. The hon. Member for Montrose, in this respect, proves a little too much. It would have been more frank

and instructive if he had told us how these petitions and these movements are managed. I must do it for him. In consequence of the organisation and agitation of the middle-class that has gone on of late years, a new profession has arisen in this country. An hon. Gentleman the other night said that diplomacy was going out of fashion. Possibly: there are people who think lawyers useless, and make their own wills; there are others who think doctors good for nothing, and take quack medicines; and there may be ministers of State who think that they can dispense with the services of ambassadors and envoys. But those who are interested in finding employment for the rising generation need not be alarmed—a new profession has been discovered which will supply the place of the obsolete ones. It is a profession which requires many votaries—chairmen, deputy-chairmen; secretaries, committee-men, missionaries, pamphleteers, lecturers, hired orators—

> Grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, aliptes,
> Augur, schœnobates, medicus, magus.*

The business of this profession is to discover or invent great questions. When a great question is settled, it is the ruin of the profession. There is no need for a chairman, for there is no chair to fill—no want of a deputy-chairman to represent his hon. Friend—there are no committees to be attended—no pamphlets to be written—the lecturer is idle, and the orator is dumb. The rule, however, is, when a great question has been settled, immediately to look out for a new one; yet to find a new great question is often the most difficult thing in the world. The profession like a new great question to loom in the distance before the old one is quite safe in port. Unfortunately for the profession, the right hon. Member for Tamworth (Sir Robert Peel) at one

* Juvenal, Sat. iii. 76, 77.

stroke suddenly curtailed their last labours. After the great question of free imports, which they call free trade, was carried, the profession were at fault; they were flushed with triumph, but hungry for new prey. The hon. Member for the West Riding (Mr. Cobden), like a wise man, left them in the lurch and went abroad. Unfortunately for him, he returned a little too soon. However, he brought back a great question with him; and the profession were beginning to work perpetual peace when unfortunately occurred a state of general war. It was a terrible mistake: however, the hon. Member for the West Riding is a man of real talents, and he will get over it—in time. It was impossible to proceed with the perpetual peace plan after the unhappy affair at Paris—so it was shelved; and then this fortunate pamphlet happened to turn up. Electoral districts was a new cry, and served to flavour the somewhat stale pretexts of triennial Parliaments and vote by ballot. People who live in the country know little of what is going on except from the newspapers; and, seeing accounts of the public meetings that have been going forward, they have naturally thought there must be something rotten in the State; but I can assure them the matter is managed with the utmost caution and finesse—like delicate artists they feel their way. Popular enthusiasm requires some cultivation. I will show you, on the authority of the journal that is the avowed organ of the 'New Movement,' how dexterously and with how much prudence a national demonstration is cockered up:—

REFORM MOVEMENT.

The New League Movement in Manchester.

It is well known that the Anti-Corn-Law League Rooms in Manchester have been occupied, since the dissolution of that body, as the place of occasional meeting for most of the gentlemen who took part in the great Anti-Corn-Law struggle.

Why, did we not always hear that the great Anti-Corn-Law League was entirely confined to that single object? But it seems that after their success they have been meeting there ever since—not knowing what to do.

Newall's Buildings [the *locus in quo*] have already become memorable, and their site will, in future days, be traced with scrupulous fidelity by the local historians. Their celebrity promises to be heightened by fresh movements for popular freedom by the men who contended for and gained commercial liberty. A gathering of some ten or a dozen of the old batch of free-traders took place there, as we have already stated, on Thursday evening; and amongst those who took part in the proceedings were Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, Mr. Kershaw, and Mr. J. B. Smith. Mr. George Wilson, chairman of the Anti-Corn-Law League, presided on the occasion. The meeting was private, and the proceedings, of course, preliminary; but strong opinions were expressed in favour of household suffrage, vote by ballot, triennial Parliaments, and equal electoral districts. It was ultimately agreed that a circular, signed by the chairman, should be forwarded to all the supporters of the free-trade movement, and that when public opinion should have been obtained on the points under discussion, a more decided measure be taken for appealing to the people at large.

The circular adopted on this occasion was as follows:—

Newall's Buildings, Manchester, April 27.

DEAR SIR,—A number of gentlemen have met here to-day to consider what steps should be taken to promote a cordial union of all classes of reformers in favour of an improvement in our system of Parliamentary representation. They feel that the increasing expenditure and increasing taxation are causes of the deepest anxiety, and they doubt the possibility of any permanent remedy being applied whilst the taxpayers are for the most part excluded from direct influence in Parliament.

I have been requested to address this circular to you, to ascertain how far you think the extension of the franchise to all householders, with the protection of the ballot, the more equal distribution of the electoral power by means of electoral districts, and the shortening of the duration of Parliaments to a period not exceeding three years—would afford a system of representation such as the middle-classes, now partially enfranchised, would generally acquiesce in, and which the unenfranchised classes would accept as a substantial admission to their legitimate place in the constitution.

I shall be glad also to know whether you think that at the present time a

movement is desirable in favour of the changes I have indicated, and if you are disposed to co-operate with an association founded for the purpose of promoting them. I shall be glad also to know what—so far as you have ascertained—is the prevailing feeling of the inhabitants of your town or district on the subject to which I have referred.

The replies to this circular will not be published, and I will thank you to favour me with an answer at your earliest convenience.

This circular bears the signature of a gentleman, whom I will not call distinguished, for that would be prostituting an epithet—and whom I will not call notorious, for that might be offensive—and whom therefore I will describe as the well-known Mr. George Wilson. The newspaper goes on to say—

A very few weeks will now determine whether the country is to have a new league, more formidable than the former one, inasmuch as it will gather within its fold many sects and parties who stood aloof from the Anti-Corn-Law League in the early stage of its operations.

Now, I have shown the House, without exaggeration, quoting merely their own documents, the manner in which this thing is brought about. It is factitious—it is not popular. Let me not be misunderstood—let it not be said that I am opposed to popular feeling when I say this. No: it is the same movement that has given you colonial, parliamentary, and commercial reform, and now proposes to give you financial reform. It is the same movement that has always resulted, by their own confession, in disaster and disappointment. But the remarkable circumstance is this—that the present movement has not in the slightest degree originated in any class of the people. Even if the people be misled, it is possible that there might be a popular movement and yet erroneous; but this is erroneous and not popular. But the moral I draw from all this—from observing this system of organised agitation—this playing and paltering with popular

passions for the aggrandisement of one too ambitious class—the moral I draw is this—why are the people of England forced to find leaders among these persons? The proper leaders of the people are the gentlemen of England. If they are not the leaders of the people, I do not see why there should be gentlemen. Yes—it is because the gentlemen of England have been negligent of their duties, and unmindful of their station, that the system of professional agitation, so ruinous to the best interests of the country, has arisen in England.

It was not always so. My hon. Friends around me call themselves the country party. Why, that was the name once in England of a party who were the foremost to vindicate popular rights—who were the natural leaders of the people, and the champions of everything national and popular; and you must blame yourselves alone if you have allowed the power that has been entrusted to you by the constitution to slip from your hands, to be exercised for other interests than the general good of your country. When Sir William Wyndham was the leader of the country party, do you think he would have allowed any chairman or deputy-chairman, any lecturer or pamphleteer, to deprive him of his hold on the heart of the people of this country? No, never! Do you think that when the question of suffrage was brought before the House, he would have allowed any class who had boldly avowed their determination to obtain predominance, to take up and settle that question? Read what Sir J. Hynde Cotton, in the days of Walpole, said on the question of the suffrage. He was one of the greatest gentlemen in the country; he did not run away every night from the House and pair till half-past eleven, and let the country go to the dogs. If it be true that we are on the eve of troublous times—if it indeed be necessary that changes should

take place in this country—let them be effected by those who ought to be the leaders in all political and social changes. Then we shall not find changes carried into effect for the unblushing purpose of securing a middle-class Government, but an English and a national Government, the pride of the people, and in which confidence can be placed. Then, if you are called on to make changes, it will be in your power to make them within the scope and according to the spirit of the English constitution; because, notwithstanding the sneers of the hon. Gentleman and his Friend to-night, I am not ashamed to say that I wish to maintain the constitution; and I do not mean, by the term constitution, merely the House of Commons, and still less a particular party in the House, which some hon. Gentlemen opposite seem always to consider the English constitution. But I would effect these changes, if necessary, according to the spirit of the constitution: it is a capacious spirit—it will allow you to do all that is required, and yet maintain the institutions of the country. And indeed, Sir, I would maintain that constitution, not merely because it has secured to us the benignant sway of an ancient monarchy, mitigated in its operation by the co-ordinate authority of popular estates—not merely because it has planted English liberty broadly and deeply in the land, and not made it a thing dependent on the breath of an individual, or the caprice or passion of some great city– not merely because it has secured to us the due administration of justice, safety of person, respect for property (though these are all considerations doubtless of vast import)—but I would maintain that constitution because I firmly believe that, of all existing polities, it is that system which most tends to secure the happiness and elevate the condition of the great body of the people.

POSTPONEMENT OF THE REFORM BILL OF LORD JOHN RUSSELL.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, APRIL 11, 1854.

[SIR EDWARD DERING, MR. HUME, MR. BRIGHT, MR. LABOUCHERE, LORD JOCELYN, and LORD HARRY VANE, preceded Mr. Disraeli in this Debate.]

I THINK, Sir, that her Majesty's Government have arrived at a sound conclusion in that which they have communicated to the House to-night, and that the country is to be congratulated upon it. I am not, therefore, disposed to indulge in those sarcasms which the noble Lord anticipated on this occasion; and if the conduct of the Government with respect to other measures which I may also feel it to be my duty to oppose be influenced by the same feelings and regulated by the same policy, I can promise the noble Lord that he will experience from me an opposition as mitigated as on the present occasion. But although I shall never shrink from exercising my best efforts to vindicate the opinions of my friends, and to resist any measures which we think obnoxious to the public welfare, if such measures are brought forward by the noble Lord, I can assure the noble Lord I am little disposed to-night, after the address he has made, to view with any spirit of acerbity the course he has adopted. Although it has been my fate to be always seated opposite to the noble Lord, I can say, most

sincerely, there is no one in this House has a more heartfelt respect for the noble Lord than I have. I think his character and career are precious possessions of the House of Commons, and I am sure that the Members of the House of Commons will always cherish them. Wherever the noble Lord sits, I am sure he will be accompanied by the respect of every Member of this House; and I think the manner in which to-night he has made what was evidently a painful communication is in every way worthy of the noble Lord's character.

But, Sir, although I am satisfied with the course which her Majesty's Ministers have proposed to take with respect to this Bill for Parliamentary Reform, and although the feelings which I have endeavoured imperfectly to express with regard to the noble Lord are most sincere, I still feel it my duty to express my conviction that all that the noble Lord has said to-night has not really met the real difficulty of his position. All the influences which he has placed before us to-night, and which have induced him to take a course so opposite to that which he originally contemplated; have been in operation during the whole of the session, and, therefore, I am obliged to ask the noble Lord how it was that, yielding now to these influences, the noble Lord and his colleagues felt themselves justified in bringing forward this Bill for Parliamentary Reform at the commencement of the Session?

The noble Lord has stated to-night a variety of causes which have induced him to adopt this final course. Did they not exist when Parliament met? Did they not exist on the 13th of February, when the noble Lord in detail—in spite of every warning, notwithstanding every remonstrance—determined to place that measure before Parliament and the country? Why on the very first night we assembled the

noble Lord was met from this side of the House by appeals to him not to pursue the course he then contemplated. He was told that the state of war which then virtually existed was one that rendered the period most inopportune for the discussion of a proposal for organic changes in the constitution of the country. The noble Lord would not listen to the appeals then made to him. The noble Lord, with great ingenuity, maintained by instances and by arguments that a period of war was particularly qualified and adapted for the discussion of such business as this; that, the public mind being distracted from the measure of Parliamentary reform, it was possible to devise a measure, without being so much influenced by popular feeling and popular passion as in ordinary circumstances they might be. The noble Lord attempted to lay down the principle that the fact of being in a state of war was in favour of this change. The noble Lord afterwards showed us that war with Russia was a condition of things peculiarly favourable to the prosecution of a measure of this kind.

The noble Lord has, to-night, observed that there is some force in the remark that there is inconvenience in laying a measure upon the table and not proceeding with it, which brands, I may say, almost a sixth of the Members of the House of Commons. In a country like this, where so much depends upon prescription, the noble Lord must feel that at any time for a Minister of the Crown to bring forward a measure that shakes the influence of prescription is a hazardous enterprise. It is certainly one that should not be risked, unless that Minister has every prospect of succeeding with his measure, and of substituting for the power or influence which he is going to destroy or to abrogate that new power or influence which, in his opinion, will more beneficially operate upon the Government of the country. Now,

what is Parliamentary reform? We are in the habit of so familiarly using that phrase that we are almost too apt to forget its exact meaning. After all, a measure for the reconstruction of Parliament is a measure to affect and to change the principal depositary of power in the State. A measure of Parliamentary reform is a measure which virtually says to a large class of the people, 'You do not possess political power—you ought to possess political power—and this is a measure to give you political power.' On the other hand, it says to another class, 'You possess political power—you ought not to possess political power—and we are going to take that political power you hold from you.' These are grave measures. A measure of that kind, if introduced merely by an independent Member, may be looked on as a motion brought forward for discussion in a debating society, though the ability of the individual who introduced it, his knowledge of the subject, his depth of reasoning, and eloquence of language, may produce, in the long run, an amount of public opinion that may support and give influence to his views; but when a measure of Parliamentary reform is brought forward by a Minister of the great reputation of the noble Lord, and when a man is told that he does not possess political power, and ought to possess it, and the measure of the Government would give it to him, from that moment that man feels himself as a person aggrieved, as one deprived of his rights, so that you are absolutely producing a disaffected class by the proposition of the Government. On the other hand, every man whose franchise is threatened by such a measure, every corporation, every individual who is told that the Government are about to deprive him of power that he and those who preceded him have long exercised, though the Government do not proceed with the measure, will look upon the Government

as their enemy—as persons who, when they have the opportunity, would deprive them of the rights and franchises which they so much value. Therefore it is clear that when a Minister makes a proposition of this nature, and does not proceed with it, he is creating disaffection amongst some classes and dislike amongst others. He is, in fact, weakening the constituted authorities of the country, and enfeebling the established institutions of the land. That, I think, is a most unwise course, and it only proves that no Minister should embark in an undertaking of such a nature as Parliamentary reform without the necessity for the change being clear, and his ability to accomplish his purpose being evident and palpable.

Now we are told that we are going to war, and that it is necessary that the sympathy of all classes should surround the Government and the Executive. We are told that we are going to war, and you are encouraging and developing the sympathies of all classes of Her Majesty's subjects by telling some that they deserve to possess rights which you will not give them, and by telling others that they exercise rights which you mean to take from them. Why, Sir, the noble Lord has in the course of this Session expressed his opinion that a state of war, and especially a state of war with Russia, was no sufficient reason for relinquishing the measure that has been recently under our consideration, or rather proposed to us. The noble Lord is not the only Member of the Cabinet who has expressed this opinion. The First Minister, in another place, and even very recently, expressed his opinion that there was nothing in the state of our external relations which would induce the Government not to proceed with this measure—a measure which he believed had been received with the utmost favour throughout the country. The noble Lord (Lord John Russell) seems

to complain of the apathy with which his measure was received by the country. But we have always been told by the noble Lord and his Colleagues, that we should legislate on this question when there is no excitement and no passion; that the proper time for introducing these changes and making these amendments in our representative system is the moment when the people are tranquil, and the public mind is not inflamed, or unduly attracted to the subject, so that the contemplation of statesmen may be calm and undisturbed. And, therefore, it is a new argument introduced into this Debate that the apathy of the public mind is a reason for not proceeding with this measure.

Well, but there is another reason which has been urged by the noble Lord, and which, I confess, astonished me. I understood him to complain of the opposition which this measure had received in the House of Commons. Now, what I complain of is, that no opportunity has ever been given us for discussing this measure.

Lord John RUSSELL: I said the House had shown indisposition to consider this measure.

Mr. DISRAELI: But I cannot understand how the noble Lord arrives at the fact that there exists an indisposition on the part of the House of Commons to entertain this measure. The noble Lord in the first place advised the Sovereign to notify, in the Speech from the Throne, that the measure of Parliamentary reform would be brought forward. This, of course, is the most solemn mode of introducing the subject to the consideration of Parliament. I do not suppose on the first night of the Session, when Her Majesty's Gracious Speech was under consideration, that any one could complain that the manner in which that announcement was received was discouraging to the Minister. An appeal was made to him not to bring forward the mea-

sure on the ground of the exigent state of the country; but to this the Minister would not listen. On the contrary, he brings forward this measure, lays it on the table, and says, 'I deprecate discussion now, but on this day fortnight, or some other convenient day, you will discuss the measure which in detail I have now introduced to the notice of the House and of the country.' Now I think that it is very inconvenient that any Minister should bring forward a measure of such vast importance, upon a subject of such general interest — that he should have the opportunity of introducing it, with all the advantages which not only his abilities but his station give him, and that it should never be subjected to the slightest discussion. The principles on which it is founded may be most fallacious, and I think the principles on which this measure is founded are most fallacious; but still no opportunity has been given to the House to express an opinion upon it, because when the exposition of the measure takes place, a future day is fixed by the Government for the discussion of its merits; and then that opportunity thus promised is never given. Well, then, I wish to know whether this opposition, or rather this indisposition, which the noble Lord finds to his Reform Bill, is an indisposition on his own benches. I will not say on the Treasury Bench, because we now have it on the highest authority, that the Government is a Government of sincere Reformers—but I suppose that it is not impertinent to imagine that the indisposition may be on the benches behind the noble Lord. At any rate I venture to say on the part of hon. Gentlemen on this side of the House, that there has been no opposition from these benches. An hon. Gentleman, who is a general supporter of the Government, has spoken of the opposition to this measure as if it had proceeded from us. And no doubt it is not at all impossible

that you would have received an uncompromising opposition from the benches opposite to you. But you never gave us an opportunity for discussing the measure, and therefore I beg the country to remember that the indisposition to Parliamentary reform in the present House of Commons, so far as we have any evidence of it, is confined entirely to the noble Lord's own side of the House.

But I beg the House to remark that the noble Lord has not met the difficulty of his case, that all the reasons that he has given for relinquishing his measure to-night were reasons that existed in equal force at the meeting of Parliament, and on the 13th of February, when he introduced this Bill. I deny that any member of the Cabinet can advance the present state of the country as a reason for not proceeding with this measure. The noble Lord has very properly vindicated himself from the absurd position in which it is the interest of some parties to place him as being the only Parliamentary Reformer in the Cabinet, and as if it was entirely to vindicate his own personal honour that this measure had been introduced. The noble Lord has very properly recalled the attention of the House to the fact that the Government of the Earl of Aberdeen was founded on the promise of a large measure of Parliamentary reform. Nor was it merely in deference to the noble Lord that the Government of the Earl of Aberdeen was founded on the principle of Parliamentary reform. A very distinguished Member of the Cabinet (Sir James Graham) made a large measure of Parliamentary reform a condition of his joining Lord Aberdeen: and Lord Aberdeen, in his speech when he made an exposition of the principles upon which his Government was founded, unequivocally pledged himself to a large measure of Parliamentary reform.

Now, I want to know what were the circumstances under

which the Government of Lord Aberdeen made that pledge? What were the circumstances under which the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Admiralty made the concession of a large measure of Parliamentary reform a condition of his adhesion to the Government of Lord Aberdeen? Were they circumstances of less peril than the present? Were they less serious? Was the conjuncture less menacing than at present? We really seem to have forgotten the circumstances under which Lord Aberdeen acceded to power. Why, after an interval of between thirty and forty years, what had the House of Commons just done? They had armed the people; they had absolutely called out the militia; and were arming, and training, and disciplining 100,000 men. A few months before Lord Aberdeen entered office, the late Government had considerably increased the Naval Estimates; but no sooner had the First Lord of the Admiralty come into office than he doubled those Estimates. Nor had the present Government been four months in office before they formed a project—which they subsequently executed—of having a military camp at Chobham. It was well known that the Government then believed that not merely war but invasion was imminent.

Now, Sir, no one will pretend that a war with France is not a much more awful affair than a war with Russia; and yet with a war with France in their opinion impending, they formed their Government on the principle of a large measure of Parliamentary reform. And did the adoption of that statement not serve them? Could they have formed their Cabinet unless that had formed the principle upon which that Cabinet was established? Could they have carried on their Government for six months unless that had been the principle upon which the Government of Lord Aberdeen had been established? Could they have possessed, not

merely the great administrative abilities of the First Lord of the Admiralty, but the profound statesmanlike attributes even of the First Commissioner of Works (Sir William Molesworth)? Could he have given to the Government the fruits of those studies which Bentham had inspired and Grote had guided?

How did they carry on the Administration? Why, only a very few months afterwards we had the financial measures of the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought forward, which, according to the noble Lord's statement to-night, was the excuse for not proceeding with Parliamentary reform in the first year that the Government held office. A tax extremely odious in the mode in which it is levied was introduced to this House, it being known that there was an absolute majority against the imposition of that tax, and that the most powerful assailants of this tax—the income tax—were to be found on the benches where the supporters of the present Government mostly congregate. Did not these Gentlemen say that they disapproved of the unmodified income tax, and only voted for it in consequence of this promise of a large measure of Parliamentary reform? And, therefore, I say that Parliamentary reform was the principle upon which the Government was founded, and without it the present Cabinet would never have existed, and that without it the administration of affairs could not have been carried on. I say also at the same time, that the pledge to give a large measure of Parliamentary reform was made at a time when the state of public affairs, as far as our external relations were concerned, was not less menacing, nay I think more perilous and threatening, than it is at the present time.

Myself opposed to the measure of the noble Lord, I am glad that the Government has relinquished it. But what is

the moral that I think we should draw from all these circumstances? I think we should at least come to this conclusion—in my opinion, a salutary one—though no one can question the honour and sincerity of the noble Lord who has been identified with this great question and this great cause—who will go down in history as connected with it—though no one, I say, can doubt his sincerity, and though I do not for a moment care to question the sincerity of others—still I must say, that there does appear to me, and I think there will appear to the country, that there has been too much levity, for party purposes, in dealing with questions of organic change in the Constitution of this country. Well, now, I think, if we can, under the present circumstances, when there is no party feeling on this question, and when all parties and sections of this House seem pretty well agreed to assist the Government out of the predicament—I think, I say, that if we can arrive at that conclusion, every man, wherever he sits, will consider probably longer than he might have done two or three years ago before he makes pledges on a subject of this importance. Because we should find that if a Minister persisted—which the noble Lord has wisely and magnanimously resolved not to do—in consequence of a pledge of this kind, in carrying measures not required by the necessities of the country, a great public evil might occur. And if, on the other hand, after having pledged his sagacity as a statesman for the necessity and expediency of such a measure, he finds it necessary to relinquish it, then, although great public mischief may not occur, there is at least this disadvantage—that the confidence of the country in the men they look up to must be necessarily shaken and diminished. Nor does it seem to me that a time of war, which we are told may be very serious and protracted, is a time when, I do not say this want of confidence, but

this diminished confidence, in our principal statesmen should be incurred. I hope, therefore, that the noble Lord will not proceed in the course of which he has given an indication to-night—of postponing for a short but indefinite time his plans of Parliamentary reform. I think it would be much better for the noble Lord—who has made two attempts, which, he says, have not been sanctioned by the country, and which he feels are not required by the country—to allow this question altogether to drop, and not to embarrass himself by another pledge.

Yet, what has the noble Lord done to-night? After all this somewhat bitter experience, he has absolutely embarrassed himself and all his Colleagues by promising to take as early an opportunity as possible to introduce this measure again. [*Cheers.*] I think that cheer is most unwise, and that those who cheer will be probably the loudest in opposing the measure when it is brought forward. I confess, Sir, I do not understand this getting rid of reform by instalments. You who are always asking for measures of reform, and taking them by instalments, should hardly sanction this new system, by which reformers are to get rid of their pledges by instalments. It would have been better for the noble Lord to say, 'I have made a considerable attempt. The Cabinet have stood by me. This measure is the result of our united deliberations. But the country does not require it, the times are perilous, and although I think that a time of war is no good cause why a measure of Parliamentary reform should not be carried if it were required, still it is not now absolutely necessary; it would involve a great struggle, and, therefore, for the present, I will say farewell to Parliamentary reform.' Hon. gentlemen opposite would have then had just as good a chance of getting Parliamentary reform when the time arrived as they have now by retaining

the vain pledges of a Minister. Surely, the experience of the last two years must have taught you that you are not one whit the nearer a measure of Parliamentary reform because you have the pledges of statesmen that they will give it to you. Here you have statesmen who have pledged themselves, and who were most sincerely anxious to fulfil their pledges, but you did not obtain your object. You never can obtain a change such as you desire until the great preponderance of public opinion demands it.

Well, then, why embarrass the Government with a constant pledge of this kind? The noble Lord will pardon me for saying that it would have been more statesman-like if, after all he has done, and, I will say, after all he has suffered, he had asked the House to-night to place confidence in his sincerity, and to show, by the manner in which they received his words to-night, that they thought his honour was intact; and had then told them that it was much better not to embarrass the Government any longer with pledges on this subject, but that they might be confident that when the time was ripe, the measures that were demanded by necessity would be brought forward by any Ministry which happened then to be in possession of power. I do hope that the noble Lord will at least draw this lesson from the past—not to embarrass himself with pledges, which he knows not when he can fulfil, merely for party purposes, and to animate followers who must now feel that, after all, measures of this great national importance depend upon something more solid than the word of any individual, however sincere or however gifted.

THE REFORM BILL OF 1859.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, FEBRUARY 28, 1859.

SIR, it is my duty to-night to draw the attention of the House to a theme than which nothing more important can be submitted to their consideration. Those which are often esteemed the greatest political questions—those questions, for example, of peace or war which now occupy and agitate the public mind, are in fact inferior. In either of those cases an erroneous policy may be retraced; and there are no disasters which cannot be successfully encountered by the energies of a free people; but the principles upon which the distribution of power depends in a community when once adopted can rarely be changed. An error in that direction may permanently affect the fortunes of a State or the character of a people.

But, grave as is the duty, and difficult as is the task, which have devolved upon Her Majesty's Government in undertaking to prepare a measure to amend the representation of the people in this House, these I admit, and cheerfully admit, are considerably mitigated by two circumstances—the absence of all passion on the subject, and the

advantage of experience. Whatever may be the causes, on which I care not to dwell, I believe that on this subject and on this occasion I appeal to as impartial a tribunal as is compatible with our popular form of government. I believe there is a general wish among all men of light and leading in this country that the solution of this long-controverted question should be arrived at; and that if public men occupying the position which we now occupy, feel it their duty to come forward to offer that solution—one which I trust in our case will not be based upon any mean concession or any temporary compromise, but on principles consistent with the spirit of our Constitution, which will bear the scrutiny of debate, and which I trust may obtain the sympathy of public opinion—I feel persuaded that in the present conjuncture of our political world such an attempt will meet from this House a candid though a discriminating support. And equally it may be observed, that the public mind of this country has for the last quarter of a century, and especially during its latter portion, been so habituated to the consideration of all questions connected with popular representation, the period itself has been so prolific of political phenomena for the contemplation and study, and I may add, the instruction, of the people of this country, that we are in a much more favourable position than the statesmen who in 1832 undertook the great office which then devolved upon them, because we address not only a Parliament but a country which has upon this subject the advantage of previous knowledge; and all will agree that this greatly facilitates both discussion and decision. Although some of those who took a leading part in the transactions of 1832, happily for us, still sit in both Houses of Parliament, yet so long is the space of time that has elapsed since those occurrences, I think it is not impossible to speak

of them with something of the candour of history. I do not doubt that our future records will acknowledge that, during some of the most important political events of modern history, those events were treated with the energy and the resource becoming British statesmen. If we judge of the Act of 1832 by its consequences, in the measures of this House and in the character of its Members, it must be admitted that that policy was equal to the emergency it controlled and directed. I cannot, indeed, agree with those who attribute to the legislation of 1832 every measure of public benefit that has been passed by this House during the last twenty-five years. I know well that before the reform of this House took place the administration of this country was distinguished by its ability and precision. I believe, indeed, that, especially in the latter part of the administration of Lord Liverpool, this House was rather in advance of the opinion of the country at large. But I think that the reform of the House of Commons in 1832 greatly added to the energy and public spirit in which we had then become somewhat deficient.

But, Sir, it must be remembered that the labours of the statesmen who took part in the transactions of 1832 were eminently experimental. In many respects they had to treat their subject empirically, and it is not to be wondered at if in the course of time it was found that some errors were committed in that settlement; and if, as time rolled on, some, if not many deficiencies, were discovered. I beg the House to consider well those effects of time, and what has been the character of the twenty-five years that have elapsed since the Reform of 1832. They form no ordinary period. In a progressive country, and a progressive age, progress has been not only rapid, but, perhaps, precipitate. There is no instance in the history of Europe of such an increase

of population as has taken place in this country during this period. There is no example in the history of Europe or of America, of a creation and accumulation of capital so vast as has occurred in this country in those twenty-five years. And I believe the general diffusion of intelligence has kept pace with that increase of population and wealth. In that period you have brought science to bear on social life in a manner no philosopher in his dreams could ever have anticipated. In that space of time you have, in a manner, annihilated both time and space. The influence of the discovery of printing is really only beginning to work on the multitude. It is, therefore, not surprising, that, in a measure passed twenty-five years ago, in a spirit necessarily experimental, however distinguished were its authors, and however remarkable their ability, some omissions have been found that ought to be supplied, and some defects that ought to be remedied. In such a state of things a question in England becomes what is called a public question. Thus Parliamentary Reform becomes a public question; a public question in due course of time becomes a Parliamentary question; and then, as it were, shedding its last skin, it becomes a ministerial question.

Reform has been for fifteen years a Parliamentary question; for ten years it has been a ministerial question. It is ten years since the Prime Minister of that day, who sat in this House, after resisting for some time a series of Motions, the object of which was to change the settlement of 1832, declared it to be the opinion of himself and his colleagues that some alteration ought to be made in it. Public events prevented that minister from immediately acting on that public declaration. But in 1852, I believe in this very month of February, that Prime Minister counselled Her Majesty to address Parliament from the throne in these terms:—

"It appears to me that this is a fitting time for calmly considering whether it may not be advisable to make such amendments in the Act of the late reign, relating to the representation of the Commons in Parliament, as may be deemed calculated to carry into more complete effect the principles upon which that law is founded. I have the fullest confidence, that in any such consideration you will firmly adhere to the acknowledged principles of the Constitution by which the prerogative of the Crown, the authority of both Houses of Parliament, and the rights and liberties of the people are equally secured."

In consequence of that announcement from the throne, a measure of Parliamentary Reform was brought forward by the Ministry of the day. It was not pressed, in consequence of a change of Government which then took place. But two years afterwards, another Minister being at the head of affairs—a Minister who, in the general tenour of his politics, afforded a contrast to the one who introduced the measure of 1852—a Minister born and bred in what is termed the Tory camp, as his predecessor was born and bred in the Whig camp; this Minister being called on to form a Government having to consider the requirements of the country, as every individual with that responsibility is bound to consider them, felt it his duty to counsel Her Majesty, in February, 1854, to address to Parliament this language from the throne:—

"Recent experience has shown that it is necessary to take more effectual precautions against the evils of bribery and corrupt practices at elections. It will also be your duty to consider whether more complete effect may not be given to the principles of the Act of the last reign, whereby reforms were made in the representation of the people in Parliament. In recommending this subject to your consideration, my desire is to remove every cause of just complaint, to increase general confidence in the Legislature, and to give additional stability to the settled institutions of the State."

In consequence of that announcement, another measure was brought forward by the Ministry of Lord Aberdeen, which was considered stronger than the measure of 1852, proposed by Lord John Russell—for it is not against order thus his-

torically to mention that distinguished name. But circumstances again changed, and prevented the Legislature from proceeding with that measure of reform. The country became involved in a war with a first-rate power—a war that might be described as European. Before it terminated, a change of Government again occurred. Another statesman, who may well be compared with the two distinguished men who preceded him—a statesman renowned, not only for his ability, but his great experience, and whose political prejudices—if he has any [*laughter and cheers*]—well, then, I will say, whose superiority to prejudice—at any rate, a statesman who has no morbid sympathy with advanced opinions. Then what did that noble Lord deem it to be his first civil duty to accomplish when he accepted the responsibility of office, and peace had been concluded? In the same solemn and impressive manner adopted by the noble Lord the Member for the City, and by the Earl of Aberdeen, the noble Lord, in 1857, on the termination of peace, counselled his Sovereign to address Parliament in these words:—

"Your attention will be called to the laws which regulate the representation of the people in Parliament, with a view to consider what Amendments may be safely and beneficially made therein."

The House will therefore see that during three Ministries the subject of Parliamentary reform has been formally brought before the attention of the Legislature. And let me remind hon. Gentlemen, that although circumstances have prevented the ministers who preceded us from either proceeding with the measures which they introduced, or with the measures which they proposed, this House has shown during that interval no disposition to wait, and no reluctance to deal with it. The consequence is, that you have had, up to the end of the last session of Parliament, independent Members of this assembly continuing that

course which was pursued before any of those messages from the throne were delivered to the Legislature—namely, that of carrying a reform of Parliament by measures of detail, instead of taking a general view and bringing forward a comprehensive plan which should effect a fair adjustment of all the points in controversy.

This, Sir, was the state of the question when, a change of Government again occurring, the Earl of Derby became responsible for the administration of this country. Let me now ask the House what, in their opinion, was our duty under these circumstances? That, from the peculiar position at which this question had arrived, it might have been practicable by evasion for a time to stave off a solution, I do not say is impossible; but that is a course which, speaking for my colleagues and myself, I may respectfully observe is not at all congenial with our tastes. Were you to allow this question, which the Sovereign had three times announced was one that ought to be dealt with—which three Prime Ministers, among the most skilful and authoritative of our Statesmen, had declared it was their intention to deal with—to remain in abeyance? Was it to be left as a means of reorganising an opposition? Is that the opinion of either side of this House? Is it the judgment of this House that that is a wholesome position for political questions of the highest quality to occupy? Was Parliamentary Reform—a subject which touches the interests of all classes and all individuals, and in the wise and proper settlement of which the very destiny of this country is concerned—to be suffered to remain as a desperate resource of faction; or was it a matter to be grappled with only at a moment of great popular excitement, and settled not by the reason, but by the passion, of the people? Were we to establish, as it were, a chronic irritation in the public mind upon the subject, which, of all

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others, should not form the staple of our party contests? Were the energies of this country—an ancient country of complicated civilization—were they at this time of day, boasting as we do of a throne that has endured for a thousand years, to be distracted and diverted from their proper objects —the increase of the wealth and welfare of the community, and wasted in a discussion of the principles of our constitution, and of what should be the fundamental base of our political institutions? I cannot for a moment believe that this House would think that a posture of affairs which would be free from danger to the Empire, or which it would be honourable for any public man to sanction. Having, then, to consider the state of the country with reference to this question, and recalling all those details which on this occasion I feel it incumbent on me to place before the House, the Government of the Earl of Derby, on their accession to power, had to inquire what it was their duty to fulfil. And, Sir, it was the opinion—the unanimous opinion of the Cabinet of the Earl of Derby—that this subject must be dealt with, and dealt with in an earnest and sincere spirit.

But I am told that, although it might be necessary that a solution should be effected, though three Prime Ministers who had made the attempt had withdrawn from the effort, yet it was not for the Earl of Derby—even if he deemed it for the interests of his country, and held it to be his paramount duty in the position that he occupied—to undertake such a task. Sir, I dispute that statement. I say it is not a just statement, and cannot in discussion be at all maintained. What is there in the previous career of the noble Earl at the head of her Majesty's Government which should preclude him from taking that course? The noble Lord the Member for the City of London has connected his name with the question of Parliamentary Reform to his enduring

honour. I do not grudge the well-earned celebrity which he enjoys. But the noble Lord can remember the day when Earl Grey summoned himself and Mr. Stanley to his cabinet in 1832 ; and the noble Lord knows well that, had it not been for their ability and energy, probably the Reform Bill, and certainly in its present shape, would never have been passed into law. I think, therefore, it cannot for a moment be contended that there is anything in the position or antecedents of the head of the Government that should preclude him from dealing with this question. What is there in the position of hon. Gentlemen who sit on this side of the House to render it an inconsistent act, on their part, to adopt the course which I shall recommend to-night? Why, when the noble Lord introduced his measure, and also when the measure of the Earl of Aberdeen was introduced into this House, I, acting with the complete sanction and at the personal request of many now sitting behind and around me on these benches, expressed our views upon the course pursued by the Government of that day. I stated then, on their behalf, that we should offer no opposition to any measure which might be brought in, the object of which was to effect a reconstruction of this House. I said that we were prepared to adhere to the Conservative compact which was wrung from the Conservative party in 1835 by taunts and reproaches as to their insincerity in professing to be bound by the Act of 1832. I said, that by that Conservative compact, which was made by those who then represented the Conservative party in this House, we were ready to stand ; but that if those, who themselves made the settlement, questioned its propriety and proposed to amend it, we should offer no opposition, but would give to those proposed Amendments our candid consideration, making every effort on our part to improve the representation of the

people. Therefore I cannot understand the justness of the taunts which have been so freely used against our undertaking a task, which, in my mind, no one who occupies these benches can avoid, or ought to shrink from. Sir, it is in pursuance of the pledge which we gave when we acceded to office that, on the part of the Government of the Earl of Derby, I am, with your permission, to-night, to call your attention to the measures which we think it politic that this house should adopt.

Now, Sir, it appears to me that those who are called Parliamentary Reformers may be divided into two classes. The first are those whose object I will attempt to describe in a sentence. They are those who would adapt the settlement of 1832 to the England of 1859; and would act in the spirit and according to the genius of the existing Constitution. Among these Reformers I may be permitted to class Her Majesty's Ministers. But, Sir, it would not be candid, and it would be impolitic not to acknowledge that there is another school of Reformers, having objects very different from those which I have named. The new school, if I may so describe them, would avowedly effect a Parliamentary Reform on principles different from those which have hitherto been acknowledged as forming the proper foundations for this House. The new school of Reformers are of opinion that the chief, if not the sole, object of representation is to realize the opinion of the numerical majority of the country. Their standard is population; and I admit that their views have been clearly and efficiently placed before the country. Now, Sir, there is no doubt population is, and must always be, one of the elements of our representative system. There is also such a thing as property; and that, too, must be considered. I am ready to admit that the new school have not on any occasion limited the elements of their

representative system solely to population. They have, with a murmur, admitted that property has an equal claim to consideration; but, then, they have said that property and population go together. Well, Sir, population and property do go together—in statistics, but in nothing else. Population and property do not go together in politics and practice. I cannot agree with the principles of the new school, either if population or property is their sole, or if both together constitute their double, standard. I think the function of this House is something more than merely to represent the population and property of the country. This House, in my opinion, ought to represent all the interests of the country. Now, those interests are sometimes antagonistic, often competing, always independent and jealous; yet they all demand a distinctive representation in this House; and how can that be effected, under such circumstances, by the simple representation of the voice of the majority, or even by the mere preponderance of property? If the function of this House is to represent all the interests of the country, you must of course have representation scattered over the country; because interests are necessarily local. An illustration is always worth two arguments; permit, me, therefore, so to explain my meaning—if it requires explanation. Let me take the two cases of the metropolis and that of the kingdom of Scotland, to the representation of which the hon. Gentleman opposite (Mr. Baxter) is so much afraid that I should not do justice. The population of the metropolis and that of the kingdom of Scotland are, at this time, about equal. The wealth of the metropolis and the wealth of the kingdom of Scotland are very unequal. The wealth of the metropolis yields a yearly income of £44,000,000—upon which the assessment under the great schedules of the income tax is levied; while the amount upon which such assessment is levied under those schedules

in Scotland is only £30,000,000. There is, therefore, the annual difference between £44,000,000 and £30,000,000; yet who would for a moment pretend that the various classes and interests of Scotland could be adequately represented by the same number of members as represent the metropolis? So much for the population test.

Let us now take the property test. Let us take one portion of that very metropolis to which I have this moment referred. This is an age of statistics. I do not place more value upon them than they deserve; but this is, I believe, at least an accurate memorandum. Let us look to the wealth of the City of London. The wealth of the City of London is more than equivalent to that of 25 English and Welsh Counties returning 40 Members, and of 140 Boroughs returning 232 Members. The City of London, the City proper, is richer than Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham put together. Or take another and even more pregnant formula. The City of London is richer than Bristol, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield, Hull, Wolverhampton, Bradford, Brighton, Stoke-upon-Trent, Nottingham, Greenwich, Preston, East Retford, Sunderland, York, and Salford combined —towns which return among them no less than 31 Members. The City of London has not asked me to insert it in the Bill, which I am asking leave to introduce, for 31 Members. I have heard that there is another measure of Reform, in hands, probably, more able to deal with the subject than mine, and in hands which, perhaps, are much interested in ascertaining the claims of the City of London. Whether the noble Lord has made his arrangements according to the statistical return we shall probably know some day or other; but, as far as I am concerned, the citizens of London have acted with modesty and propriety. They seem to be satisfied with their representation, and to consider that, pro-

bably, no place requires a greater number of Members than the City of London at present possesses. Perhaps they have some suspicion that, if they had more Members, they would find some difficulty in obtaining men who were competent to discharge that office.

So much for the population test, and so much for the property test, if you are to reconstruct this House on either of those principles; but, the truth is, that men are sent to this House to represent the opinions of a place and not its power. We know very well what takes place at a Parliamentary election in this country. The man of a princely fortune has, when he goes to the poll, no more votes than the humble dweller in a £10 house; because we know very well that his wealth, his station and his character will give him the influence which will adequately represent his property; and the Constitution shrinks from a plurality of votes in such a case. The Constitution also shrinks from the enjoyment of a plurality of votes by large towns by means of seats in this House. It wants the large towns and cities of England to be completely represented. It wishes to see the Members for Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham in their places, ready to express the views of those powerful and influential communities; and it recognises them as the representatives of the opinions of those places, but not as the representatives of their power and influence. Because what happens to the rich man at a contested election will happen to these places. Why, Sir, the power of the city of London or that of the city of Manchester in this House is not to be measured by the honourable and respectable individuals whom they send here to represent their opinions. *I will* be bound to say that there is a score—nay, that there are three score—Members in this House who are as much and more interested, perhaps, in the city of Manchester than those

who are in this House its authoritative and authentic representatives; and when a question arises in which the interests of Manchester, Liverpool, or Birmingham are concerned, the influence of those places is shown by the votes of persons so interested in their welfare as well as by those of the respectable and respected individuals who are sent here to represent them.

Look at the metropolis itself, not speaking merely of the City of London. Is the influence of the metropolis in this House to be measured by the sixteen hon. Members who represent it, and who represent it, I have no doubt, in a manner perfectly satisfactory to their constituents, or they would not be here? No! We all of us live in the metropolis; many of the Members of this House have property, a few of them very large property, in it; and, therefore, the indirect influence of the metropolis in this House is not to be measured merely by the number of Members which it returns to Parliament. So much for that principle of population, or that principle of property, which has been adopted by some, or that principle of population and property combined, which seems to be the more favourite form. It appears to me that the principle, as one upon which the representation of the People in this House ought to be founded, is fallacious and erroneous. There is one remarkable circumstance connected with the new school, who would build up our representation on the basis of a numerical majority, and who take population as their standard. It is this—that none of their principles apply except in cases where population is concentrated. The principle of population is, although I cannot say a favourite doctrine, because I do not think it is so, a very notorious doctrine at the present moment; but it is not novel, although introduced at a comparatively recent period into our politics. It was broached in the discussions which

took place when the former Reform Bills were brought in by preceding Governments. It was the favourite argument of the late Mr. Hume. His argument for Parliamentary Reform—a subject which he frequently brought before the House—was generally this;—He took some unfortunate borough in the west of England; he described it as a borough with a very small population and with very little business, and he said:—

> This borough returns two Members to Parliament, while the great city of Manchester, with its population of hundreds of thousands, and with half the business of the world concentrated in its circle, only returns the same number. Can anything be more monstrous? Disfranchise the small borough, and give its Members to the city of Manchester.

Such was the argument which for several years passed in this House unchallenged. Mr. Hume brought forward his Motion for Parliamentary Reform in 1852, when, by a somewhat curious coincidence, I was occupying the same seat which I now fill, and it fell to my lot to make a reply to him. I stated then what I had long felt, that although I entirely rejected the principle of population, still, admitting it for the sake of argument to be a right principle, we must arrive at conclusions exactly the reverse of those which Mr. Hume and the school which he founded were perpetually impressing upon the public mind. The principle, in my opinion, is false, and would produce results dangerous to the country, and fatal to the House of Commons. But if it be true—if it be our duty to reform the representation upon it—then I say you must arrive at conclusions entirely different from those which the new school has adopted. If population is to be the standard, and you choose to disfranchise small boroughs and small constituencies, it is not to the great towns you can, according to your own principle, transfer their Members.

Perhaps the House will allow me to refer to a note of

some returns which I quoted in 1852, because they are perfectly germane to the argument which I am now offering to the House. When Mr. Hume used the illustrations, a sample of which I have just cited, I asked him to look to the case of North Cheshire, a county with a population of 249,000; with two great towns, Macclesfield and Stockport, together possessing a population of 93,000, and returning four Members to Parliament, while the residue of the county population (156,000) returned only two Members. I asked him to look to the case of South Cheshire, a county with 206,000 inhabitants, with one town of 28,000 returning two Members to Parliament, but with the rest of the county population (178,000) returning only the same number. I brought before him the remarkable case of South Derbyshire. The population of that county was 166,000. It had only got one town, Derby itself, with 40,000 inhabitants, who returned two Members to Parliament, while the residue of the county population (126,000) had also only two Members. I called his attention to the case of North Durham, with a population of 272,000. There are four great towns, Durham, Gateshead, South Shields, and Sunderland, with a conjoint population of 136,000, returning six Members to Parliament, while the county population of identically the same number (136,000) return only two Members. I referred him to the case of West Kent. That county has a population of 400,000. There are four great towns—Maidstone, Chatham, Rochester and Greenwich,—with a joint population of 172,000, returning seven Members, while the remaining inhabitants, 228,000 in number, return only two. I likewise cited the case of East Norfolk, with a population of 250,000. Two towns, Norwich and Yarmouth, with a population of 100,000, return four Members; but the county residue of 150,000 return only two.

I asked him to take the case of the East Riding, with a population of 220,000. Hull and another town return four Members; the residue of the county population (126,000) return only two. I told him to look at the West Riding, with its population of 1,300,000 reduced by nine considerable towns, to 800,000. Those 800,000 return only two Members; whereas the nine considerable towns, representing a population of 500,000, return sixteen Members. Finally, I referred him to the case of South Lancashire, with a population of 1,500,000. Ten great towns in South Lancashire, with a joint population of 1,000,000, return fifteen Members to Parliament, but the county residue of 500,000 return only two. Why, Sir, it is notorious that, if you come to population in round numbers, 10,500,000 of the people of England return only 150 or 160 county Members, while the boroughs, representing 7,500,000, return more than 330 Members. Admitting, then, the principle of population, which is the principle of the new school, I say you must disfranchise your boroughs, and give their Members to the counties.

Sir, I never heard an answer to this argument. It cannot have been misunderstood, because it was not offered in a corner, but in this House; and I repeat that, although seven years have elapsed since it was advanced, in 1852, I never heard an answer given to it. I have watched the recent agitation, when I was told that a new English constitution was to be created on the principle of population, to see if that argument was answered. It has, indeed, been said that there are some, nay, that there are many boroughs through which the landed interest is represented in this House. That may or may not be a sufficient answer to the demand of the landed interest to be more represented in this House; but it is no answer to the inhabitants of the

counties. What proves that my argument is sound, and enters into the public mind, and is accepted as authentic, is, that the noble Lord the Member for the City in 1854, acknowledged, with generous candour, that it had influenced him in the arrangements which he had made, and a large proportion of the seats—certainly two-thirds—which formerly belonged to the small constituencies that he proposed to disfranchise, he transferred to the county representation.

Let us now see, Sir, what will be the consequence if the population principle is adopted. You would have a House, generally speaking, formed partly of great landowners and partly of manufacturers. I have no doubt that, whether we look to their property or to their character, there would be no country in the world which could rival in respectability such an assembly. But would it be a House of Commons —would it represent the country—would it represent the various interests of England? Why, Sir, after all, the suffrage and the seat respecting which there is so much controversy and contest, are only means to an end. They are means by which you may create a representative assembly that is a mirror of the mind as well as the material interests of England. You want in this House every element that obtains the respect and engages the interest of the country. You must have lineage and great territorial property; you must have manufacturing enterprise of the highest character; you must have commercial weight; you must have professional ability in all its forms; but you want something more,—you want a body of men not too intimately connected either with agriculture, or with manufactures, or with commerce; not too much wedded to professional thought and professional habits; you want a body of men representing the vast variety of the English character; men who would arbitrate between the claims of those great predominant interests; who would

temper the acerbity of their controversies. You want a body of men to represent that immense portion of the community who cannot be ranked under any of those striking and powerful classes to which I have referred, but who are in their aggregate equally important and valuable, and perhaps as numerous.

Hitherto you have been able to effect this object: you have effected it by the existing borough system, which has given you a number of constituencies of various dimensions distributed over the country. No one for a moment pretends that the borough system in England was originally framed to represent all the classes and interests of the country; but it has been kept and cherished because the people found that although not directly intended for such a purpose, yet indirectly it has accomplished that object; and hence I lay it down as a principle that if you subvert that system, you are bound to substitute for it machinery equally effective. That is all I contend for. I am not wedded to arrangements, merely because they are arrangements; but what I hope this House will not sanction is, that we should remove a machinery which performs the office we desire, unless we are certain that we can substitute for it a machinery equally effective. Now, there is one remarkable feature in the agitation of the new school. It is not that they offer for the system they would subvert a substitute; it is not that they offer us new machinery for the old machinery they would abrogate; but it is a remarkable circumstance that they offer no substitute whatever. They lay down their inexorable principle; they carry it to its logical consequences, and the logical consequences would be that to this House, in the present state of the population, no doubt you would have men returned by large constituencies who would, in most instances, represent great wealth. I will make that

concession;—but when this House is assembled, how will it perform the duties of a House of Commons? I will tell you what must be the natural consequence of such a state of things. The House will lose as a matter of course its hold on the Executive. The House will assemble; it will have men sent to it, no doubt of character and wealth; the great majority of them matured and advanced in life; and having met here, they will be unable to carry on the Executive of the country. [An hon. MEMBER: Why?] Why? asks an hon. Member. Because the experiment has been tried in every country, and the same result has occurred; because it is not in the power of one or two classes to give that variety of character and acquirement by which the administration of a country can be carried on. Well, then, if this House loses its hold over the Executive of the country, what happens? We fall back on a bureaucratic system, and we should find ourselves, after all our struggles, in the very same position which in 1640 we had to extricate ourselves from. Your Administration would be carried on by a Court Minister, perhaps a Court minion. It might not be in these times, but in some future time. The result of such a system would be to create an assembly where the Members of Parliament, though chosen by great constituencies, would be chosen from limited classes, and, perhaps, only from one class of the community. There is a new school of philosophers, who are of opinion that there is no such thing as progress,—that nations move in a circle, and that after a certain cycle they arrive exactly at the same place, and stand in precisely the same circumstances which they quitted two or three centuries before. I have no time now to solve a problem of that depth. Questions so profound require the study and abstraction of the Opposition benches. But if the population principle be adopted, I should give in my adhesion to the new

school of philosophy; and I feel persuaded that the House of Commons, after all its reform and reconstruction, would find itself in the same comparatively ignominious position from which the spirit and energy of the old English gentry emancipated it more than two centuries ago. Therefore I need not inform the House that it is no part of my duty to recommend it to adopt that principle. We cannot acknowledge that population, or property, or even property and population joined together, should be the principle on which the legislative system shall be constructed. But before I refer to that part of the subject there appears to me to be one branch of the utmost interest, and which it is my duty rather to touch on before I advert to any other, and that is the state of the franchise. If there be one point more than another on which public feeling has been most shown, it has been in the desire to exercise the suffrage. That was the first claim that was made when the settlement of 1832 began to engage the critical spirit of the nation; and as the prosperity of this country increased, and as its wealth, population, and intelligence increased; as new interests arose, and as new classes were, as it were, called into social existence, that desire became stronger, and it is, I think, hardly necessary to admit that it was founded on a natural feeling, and one which we should by no means infer is entertained by those only who are disaffected towards the institutions of the country. On the contrary, in most instances that desire arises, no doubt, from a desire to participate in privileges which are appreciated.

In considering this question, I would make, first of all, one general observation, as to the object which the Ministry have had in view in preparing their measure of Reform. We have never, in any of the arrangements which we shall propose to Parliament to adopt, considered for a moment

whether they would increase or whether they would diminish the constituent body. Our sole object has been to confer the franchise on all of those to whom we thought that privilege might be safely entrusted, and who would exercise it for the general welfare of the country. I will, with the permission of the House, address myself first to the borough franchise. The Reform Act of 1832, acknowledging to a certain degree some of the old franchises of the boroughs, which exist but to a limited extent at present, established the franchise in boroughs on the occupation of a house of £10 annual value. There is a wish—I would once have said a very general wish—that instead of the household suffrage being founded on value, it should be founded by preference on rating. I am not at all surprised that more than one hon. Gentleman has received this observation with marks of assent and sympathy. I confess myself that I was always much biassed in favour of that idea. It appears to me that if you could make—to use a common phrase—the rate-book the register, you would very much simplify the business of election; but, when you come to examine this matter in detail, in order to see how it will act, you will find that it is involved in difficulties—great, all acknowledge, and, I am sorry to be obliged to confess, to my mind insurmountable. For the purpose of securing the advantage of having the rate-book the register, you must, of course, leave perfect discretion to the overseer. The overseer has an interest in raising rates, people may say; or he may be a very hot political partisan. Are you prepared to leave to the overseer the absolute discretion of appointing those who are to exercise the suffrage? Some will say, we must have some check. But what is a check but an appeal? And if you appeal, you cannot do better than appeal to the revising barrister. If you have an appeal to some other

parochial officer, you appeal to an inferior tribunal to that which you now enjoy; and, indeed, unless you permitted the overseer to be unchallenged, you could not make the rate-book the register. But even beyond this, there are other difficulties which you will find most perplexing. Notwithstanding the Parochial Assessment Act, the rating of this country is most unequal; and it is only those whose business it has been to examine into this subject in its minute details, who can be aware of the preposterous consequences which would arise from adopting a rating instead of a value qualification. Take the present qualification of £10 value, which it is very generally and popularly supposed might be supplied by an £8 rating. Now, let us see what would be the consequence upon the present constituency of adopting an £8 rating instead of a £10 value? I will take the instance of Boston, represented by my hon. and learned Friend behind me (Mr. Adams). The borough of Boston consists of two parishes; the rating of one of them is upon one-half the value, and of the other upon two-thirds of the value. The practical consequence of having an £8 rating in Boston would be to disfranchise 400 of the electors of that borough, who may or may not be supporters of my hon. and learned Friend. Then taking the case of another borough —Dover,—if you had in that borough a franchise based upon £8 rating, instead of £10 value, you would exactly double the constituency. I have taken these two instances from a great number of others, and the House will see that the idea of establishing a franchise based upon rating instead of upon value, is by no means the simple process it is by some persons supposed to be. The great objection to such a measure, which led us entirely to relinquish all idea of adopting it, is its tendency to disfranchise many of the constituencies,

I will now proceed to consider the franchise of boroughs based upon a value qualification. The £10 qualification has been severely assailed, and I think the objections to it may be ranged under two heads. First, it is said that there is no principle in a franchise founded on a £10 qualification; and secondly, it is said that a constituency based upon such a qualification must be extremely monotonous. It is said that there is such an identity of interest in a constituency so founded, when we ought to seek for variety of character, that that alone is an objection; and it has really become almost a phrase of contumely to speak of a constituency as 'only ten-pounders.' I will in the first place touch upon the objection that a £10 borough qualification is one founded upon no principle. Now, I demur to that objection. It appears to me that that qualification is founded on a principle. It is said, "Why should a man who lives in a £10 house be more fitted for the suffrage than a man who lives in a £9 house?" That appears to me to be no argument. It is a mere sophism and cavil. If it be an argument it is an argument against all tests, and not in favour of a £9 qualification. But the £10 qualification was intended as a test; and the question is, Is it a test that is effective? It is a test easily accessible; it is a test which, if adopted, is universal in its application; and it is a test which affords a fair presumption that the holder possesses those qualities which entitle him to perform the acts of citizenship. It is, therefore, founded upon a principle; and the objection urged against it appears to me to be a sophism. The other objection to the £10 qualification is that it gives a monotonous character to a constituency; that from extending the suffrage only to men who live in £10 houses you have merely one sentiment and one class of ideas represented. That appears to me to be altogether a fallacy,

resting upon the false assumption that every man who votes under a £10 qualification necessarily lives in a £10 house. But that is not the case. On the contrary, under that £10 qualification all orders of men exercise the suffrage—the most affluent and the most humble. A man who lives in a house worth £400 a-year yet votes under the £10 qualification, and instead of rendering a constituency monotonous, it secures within its range a great variety of interests, of feelings, and of opinions.

But, Sir, I am ready to admit that there are many persons quite capable of exercising the suffrage who do not live in £10 houses, and whom I should wish to see possessing the suffrage. But should we obtain that result by—I won't call it the vulgar expedient, because the epithet might be misinterpreted, though I should not use it in an offensive sense, but by the coarse and common expedient which is recommended of what is called "lowering the franchise in towns." Now, I beg the House to consider for a moment what must be the effect of lowering the franchise in towns. Suppose that, instead of a £10 borough qualification, you had a £5 borough qualification? Well, the moment that you had a £5 borough qualification you would realise all those inconvenient results which are erroneously ascribed to the £10 qualification. You would then have a monotonous constituency. You would then have a constituency whose predominant opinions would be identical. You would then have a constituency who would return to Parliament members holding the same ideas, the same opinions, the same sentiments; and all that variety which represents the English character would be entirely lost. You would then have in your borough constituency a predominant class; certainly the spirit and genius of our constitution are adverse to the predominance of any class in this House. It cer-

tainly would be most injudicious, not to say intolerable, when we are guarding ourselves against the predominance of a territorial aristocracy and the predominance of a manufacturing and commercial oligarchy, that we should reform Parliament by securing the predominance of a household democracy. I am convinced that that is not the mode in which you must improve and vary the elements of the present borough constituency. We think, Sir, that there are modes by which that object can be adequately and efficiently attained; and if the House will permit me, I will now proceed to describe them.

We propose to introduce into these borough constituencies new franchises. In the first place we shall introduce as qualifying for the suffrage a class of property which hitherto has not formed an element out of which voters have been created—I mean personal property. We shall propose to allow persons who have funded property, property in Bank Stock, or in East India Stock and Bonds, to the amount of £10 per annum to exercise the suffrage. I know the objection which may be urged by some persons against the introduction of this qualification. They will point out the obstacles to a genuine exercise of the suffrage, if that element is introduced. The House will pardon me on this occasion, when I have to travel over a vast field, and when I must confine myself to the chief feature of the measure I am recommending to their notice, if I abstain from now entering into that question. Enough for me now to say, that the Bill which I have here, and which, with the permission of the House, I shall introduce, provides, in our opinion, a satisfactory and secure machinery by which this and all other similar franchises to which I am about to advert may be exercised. Now, Sir, there is another franchise which we shall also recommend the House to adopt;

and that is one which depends upon the possession of a certain sum in the savings-banks. A man who has had £60 for one year in a savings-bank will, under this Bill, if it become law, be an elector for the borough in which he resides. Again, a man who has a pension for public service, but who has ceased to be employed in that service, whether it be her Majesty's naval, military, or civil service, to the amount of £20 a year, will, under this Bill, if it become law, be entitled to vote wherever he may reside. Then, again, Sir, the occupant of a portion of a house, the aggregate rent of which amounts to £20 a year—which would be 8s. a week,—will also be entitled to a vote.

The House has heard much of late years of what is called an educational franchise. I am bound to say that no plan for the creation of an educational franchise—in a precise sense of that word—which in their opinion would work satisfactorily, has been brought under the consideration of the Government. It has, indeed, been proposed that the basis of such a franchise should be sought for among the members of the various learned societies. But, as it has been aptly observed, it does not follow that the members of learned societies should be learned. In these days we frequently see names followed by an amount of alphabetical combination which is almost appalling; yet, though we associate the highest learning, great antiquarian and scientific acquirements, with those persons, it sometimes turns out that they only possess a respectable character and pay ten guineas a year. An educational franchise according to that high empyrean of imagination which some have attempted to reach has baffled all our practical efforts. But it will be our duty to recommend to the House that the privilege of a vote, irrespective of the more formal qualification arising from property, should be

conferred upon those classes whose education has involved some considerable investment of capital, many of them, no doubt, exercising the franchise under the previous qualifications which I have described. We have thought it advisable that the suffrage should be conferred upon graduates of all Universities; upon the ministers of religion—whether clergymen and deacons of the Church, or ministers of other denominations,—under regulations which the House will find in the Bill; upon the members of the legal profession in all its branches, whether barristers, members of the Inns of Court, solicitors, or proctors; and upon all members of the medical body who are registered under the late Medical Act. To these we have added such schoolmasters as possess a certificate from the Council.

Sir, there are some other franchises which it is our intention to give to the borough constituencies; but before I touch upon them it will be convenient that I should call the attention of the House to the subject of the county franchise. Previous to the Reform Act of 1832, the general franchise of England may be described popularly—though technically, perhaps, such a description is not quite correct—as a franchise which in the counties arose from property, and in the boroughs from occupation. When the measure passed in 1832 was first introduced, that distinction was recognised by the statesmen who had the preparation and conduct of the Bill. I have no doubt they deeply considered that question at the time; nor can it be denied that, if the constituencies had remained as they proposed them, the principle thus established would have been a distinct and a clear one. Whether, however, the distinction could have been long maintained, I may with great humility be permitted to doubt. Looking at the expansion of the country, at its vast increase in wealth and population, and not only in

wealth and population, but in those distinctive interests which seek representation in this House—remembering the 10,500,000 inhabitants of counties to whom I have already alluded, I venture humbly to doubt whether that distinction could have been long kept up. That its maintenance was convenient to the statesmen of 1832, who had immense difficulties to contend with, I can easily conceive; but whatever was their intention, they were disappointed in the plan which they had prepared, and circumstances occurred in this House which changed the character of the franchise and destroyed that distinction between property and occupation which the Ministry of Lord Grey had sought to establish. Now, the individual responsible for that change was the noble Duke who was my predecessor in the seat which I now unworthily fill; and as his conduct in this respect has often been challenged, and as there are many who now deplore the course which he then took, perhaps the House will for a moment permit me, who am well aware of the motives which influenced him, to state the reasons which induced Lord Chandos to move successfully in this House the celebrated clause that bears his name.

When the Reform Bill was introduced in 1831, it was generally avowed that the object of that measure was to give a legitimate position in the Legislature to the middle classes of England. That was the object avowed by the Ministry, and its propriety was generally acknowledged by the country. Now, when the principle that the middle classes should be represented in this House was laid down, Lord Chandos, who was then the member for the county of Buckingham, being a man who lived much among his neighbours, and who was familiar with the character and the interests of rural society, naturally felt it to be a great absurdity that the most important portion of the middle

classes—the most important even at this day, because they are the greatest employers of labour,—I mean the farmers of England—should not possess the suffrage; and it was with that view that Lord Chandos moved the clause. The sympathy of the House was so great in its favour (a sympathy not confined to party—Mr. Hume was a supporter of the Chandos clause) that the noble Lord who then led this House—Lord Althorp—felt it his duty to yield to it. But that happened then which sometimes does happen when great measures are brought forward by a Ministry and an important amendment is introduced successfully by an eager Opposition. Those who have had the preparation of great and important measures,—and I see present many upon whom that task has devolved,—know the great difficulty, the long anxiety, the constant hesitation, which are involved in such a task, and know how hard it is to adapt one part to another, and to obtain that general harmony which will meet public wants, and which will give you a chance of carrying your measure successfully through. But when a leader of Opposition carries an Amendment, which he believes to be necessary, he thinks only of the proposal which he is making to the House, and if the Ministry are obliged to adopt it, it very often does not fit in with their previous design; it does not display the harmony and unison which would perhaps have been the case had they themselves devised it with a due regard for the other details of the measure. I have no doubt that had the Government thought fit in 1831-2 to introduce the principle of occupation in the county franchise, they might have rendered it so homogeneous with their general scheme that it would have worked with perfect facility,—that we should long ere this have been quite accustomed to its operation; and then those distinctions and difficulties which have arisen might never have been heard of. But there is no doubt

that from the moment, or shortly after this £50 occupation clause was put into operation, feelings of dissatisfaction and suspicion were excited in the minds of the community. Occupiers in the county of less than £50—say £40 or £20—who, if the principle had not been admitted, would probably never have thought themselves injured, naturally looked with great soreness on the man who had voted in a borough because he had an occupation of £10. That feeling of dissatisfaction was unfortunately followed by those industrial controversies, respecting the origin or end of which it is unnecessary to say anything, but which were prolonged, and which undoubtedly occasioned great bitterness among all classes. The feeling of dissatisfaction became a feeling of distrust. It was said that commercial changes were prevented in this country chiefly by this £50 tenancy clause. The men who acted under that clause—and, take them altogether, I do not believe that a more valuable class to whom to intrust the franchise could be found—were described in this House as men void of all patriotism and public spirit, exercising the suffrage without the slightest effort of intelligence, merely at the beck of their landlords. Nothing can be more exaggerated or even groundless than the opinions which have been expressed in this House on the effect of the Chandos clause, and on the influence which it has had on popular election. In the first place, voters under the Chandos clause at no time ever exceeded one-fifth of the constituent body of counties. Therefore, had they all voted the same way, they never could have exercised that influence upon public events which has been ascribed to them. But the proprietary of the soil does not rest alone with Tories and Conservatives. There are Whig landlords, and very considerable Whig landlords. The proprietary of the soil is distributed among proprietors of all opinions; and the

consequence is, that if you look at the elections you will find that those who voted under this Chandos clause were much divided—often equally divided. It is not true, therefore, that those who vote under this qualification have exercised any very great influence upon the legislation of this country, or that they are a class who have acted always without intent or meaning. But there is no doubt that dissatisfaction, followed by distrust and misrepresentation, did raise in the country an idea that the county representation was an exclusive representation; and that it was animated only by one object; that it had a selfish interest always before it, and that it had not that sympathy with the community which we desire in that body to whom the privilege of election is intrusted. An effort was made by means of the 40s. freehold, which was retained in counties, to counteract the exaggerated influence of the £50 tenancy voters. A manufacture of votes—from the facts before me I am entitled so to call it—was carried on in the boroughs, by which it was supposed that the injurious influence of the tenants living upon the land, dwelling in the counties, might be counteracted. For the last fifteen years—for the last ten years at a very great rate, this has been going on, until it has really arrived at this point, that the number of county voters who do not dwell in the counties now exceeds the number of those who vote under the £50 clause. It was proclaimed with great triumph that when a gentleman stood for a county, his neighbours who dwelt in the county might vote for him, but some large town in the district would pour out its legions by railway, and on the nomination of some club in the metropolis would elect the representative for the county. The dwellers in the county found themselves not represented in many instances by those who lived among them. A sort of civil war was raised in this manner; and if hon. Gentlemen look

into the statistics on this point, they will see that what I may call an unnatural state of things was brought about; because there is no doubt that a man should vote for the place where he resides, or for the locality in which he is really and substantially interested. A man who votes for a place where he resides, or in which he has an interest, votes with a greater sense of responsibility than a mere stranger. Where, then, when we are considering the condition of the constituency of the country, when we are endeavouring to reconstruct it on a broad basis, which will admit within its pale all those who are trustworthy,—shall we look for means by which we may terminate these heart-burnings, and restore the constituencies of England to what I will venture to call their natural elements?

No doubt it is a labour of great difficulty. Are we to attempt to do it by restrictions?—by artificial arrangements? It might be possible to pass a law which would remove these strangers from the sphere of their political power. But, whether possible or not, who would be rash enough to propose it? How could we terminate these misunderstandings, how restore that good feeling—that which Lord Clarendon called the "good-nature of the English people" —if we took a course which would give occasion to a perpetual agitation for the removal of the restrictions which we had succeeded in establishing. Her Majesty's Government have given to this subject the most anxious consideration. I may say, that if labour, if thought, could assist us to arrive at a proper solution, neither labour nor thought has been spared. Is there any principle on which we can restore the county constituency to its natural state, and bring about that general and constant sympathy between the two portions of the constituent body which ought to exist? Her Majesty's Government are of opinion that some such

solution does exist. We think there is a principle, the justness of which will be at once acknowledged, the logical consequences of which will be at once remedial, and which, if applied with due discretion, will effect all those objects which we anxiously desire with respect to the county constituency. We find that principle in recognising the identity of suffrage between county and town.

I will proceed to show the House what, in our opinion, would be the practical consequences of recognising that identity. If the suffrages of the town are transferred to the county, and the suffrages of the county transferred to the town, all those voters who, dwelling in a town, exercise their suffrage in the county by virtue of a county suffrage, will record their votes in the town, and the freeholder, resident in a town—subject to provisions in the Bill which would prevent this constitutional instrument being turned to an improper use,—will have a right to vote for the borough in which he resides. This, as well as the franchise founded on savings-banks, will open another avenue to the mechanic, whose virtue, prudence, intelligence, and frugality entitle him to enter into the privileged pale of the constituent body of the country. If this principle be adopted, a man will vote for the place where he resides, and with which he is substantially connected. Therefore the first measure would embody this logical consequence, that it would transfer the freeholders of the town from the county to the town.

But if this principle be adopted, there are other measures which, in our opinion, it would be the duty of Parliament in this respect to adopt. Since the year 1832 there has been a peculiar increase in the population of this country, irrespective of the ratio of increase, with which we are acquainted. The creation of railways in particular districts has stimulated that increase; and this has come to pass in England, that in a

great many of the boroughs there is a population residing, who, for all social and municipal purposes, are part and parcel of the community, but who for Parliamentary purposes are pariahs. A man votes for a municipality; he pays his parochial rates and taxes; he is called upon to contribute to all purposes of charity and philanthropy in the borough; but, because he lives in a part of the borough which exceeds the boundary that was formed in 1832, he is not, though he lives in a £10 house, permitted to vote for Members of Parliament. Now, all this extramural population in fact and in spirit consists of persons who ought to be electors in the boroughs in which they reside; and we therefore propose that Boundary Commissioners should visit all the boroughs of England, and re-arrange them according to the altered circumstances of the time. I know that the title of Boundary Commissioners may cause some alarm in this country. I know there are traditions of party arrangements effected by that machinery which, whether true or not, left an unpopular recollection in the House of Commons. I believe that in the present state of public feeling on this subject, so moderate as it is, and in the present balanced state of parties, no partial or improper conduct of that character, if it ever did take place, could be repeated. But it is quite unnecessary for me to dwell upon this point, because Her Majesty's Ministers are so circumstanced, that they can, in that respect, make a proposition to the House which will at once divest it of all suspicion. Since the Reform of 1832, machinery has arisen in this country perfectly competent to effect that which we believe to be so necessary—I mean the Enclosure Commissioners. There is a body of men totally independent of all party; and we purpose to delegate to them the fulfilment of this office. They will appoint Deputy Commissioners, who will visit the boroughs. The Deputy

Commissioners will make their reports to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of State will embody them in a Bill, and that Bill will be subjected to the criticism of this House. After that, no one can for a moment suspect that there will be any opportunity of making arrangements favourable to any party.

The House has a right to ask me whether Her Majesty's Government have formed any estimate of what may be the consequence of the change which we propose in the number of the county constituencies. That is, no doubt, a point upon which one must speak with some degree of hesitation; but there are some materials in existence which are furnished by the papers before the House, and there are others which are at our command. This morning there was put into my hand a pamphlet—probably a proof—published to-day. It is by a gentleman who ranks, I believe, as the most eminent statistical authority in the country, who is well known to Gentlemen in this House, and who has often been examined before our Committees—Mr. Newmarch. Mr. Newmarch estimates that the gross increase that would be occasioned in the county voters by a £10 county franchise would be 103,000. I have no time to ascertain what are the data on which Mr. Newmarch makes his calculation, but I should be disingenuous if I did not acknowledge to the House that the estimate formed by Her Majesty's Ministers is much more considerable. I should suppose the addition to the county constituency would be not less than 200,000, one-half of which would be furnished by what statisticians call the north-western and south-eastern groups of counties—that is to say, Cheshire, Lancashire, and the West Riding on the one hand; and Kent, Sussex, and part of Surrey, on the other. With reference to those Gentlemen who have on various occasions expressed their opinion that a £20 occupation franchise is one which they should prefer to see

adopted, I would observe that the number between a £20 and a £10 franchise would, I think, be described by the figures 100,000. But with reference to the change of the county constituency from £50 to £20, I would venture to observe that, having given to this subject very considerable pains, so far as I can form an opinion, there is nothing which would make me trust the loyalty and respectability of one who lived in a £20 house in a county, in preference to one who lived in a £10 house. I am also bound to say that the estimate of 200,000 voters has been made irrespective of what the effects of the labours of the Boundary Commissioners may be. I have heard many arguments against this proposition, but only to one of them would I attach much weight, and to that not for its strength, but for the phrase which is used to clothe it. I allude to the objection that the identity which this proposition would introduce between the county and the town constituencies, may lead to what are called "electoral districts." Now, if the only protection of the English people from electoral districts is a difference of £10 in an occupation franchise between the county and the town, then I am afraid that electoral districts cannot be resisted. But believing, as I do, that there is nothing more unpopular in this country than electoral districts, and that they are alien to all the customs, manners, and associations of the people, I have no fear whatever that that scheme will be adopted until Englishmen have lost all pride in their country and all fondness for the localities in which they have lived. Why, Sir, electoral districts can never be established until you recognise the voice of a numerical majority as the right principle of representation in this House. They can be formed upon no other principle; and the measures which it is my duty to introduce on the part of the Government to the House to-night

have no other object but to assert these contrary but, as we believe, right principles upon which the representation in this House has always been based.

I have now, very imperfectly, and omitting many points, placed before the House a general view of what we propose to do with the constituent body of the country. Our object is to reconstruct that body, with no mere view of increasing its numerical amount, but solely with the object of improving it, by the addition of various classes and individuals to whom the privilege of the franchise may be trusted with safety to the State and benefit to the community. If the measure we recommend be adopted, you will have a great homogeneous constituency, with much variety of character—for variety in the franchise is perfectly consistent with identity of the suffrage; you will have a great homogeneous body, between the different sections of which there will no longer exist feelings of dissatisfaction and distrust. The elector will elect a man of the community in which he lives, and he will exercise the right under the high sense of duty that influences Englishmen in performing it. I have always thought the ideal of the constituent body in England should be this:—It should be numerous enough to be independent, and select enough to be responsible; and that is the constituency Her Majesty's Ministers believe will be formed by the measure I propose to the House to-night.

Having laid before the House the character of the elective body it becomes me to state how we propose it shall be registered, and how it may vote. The House is aware that under the present system there is a difference in the method of registration in counties and boroughs. In counties, an elector makes his own claim to be placed on the list; in boroughs the list is made out by a public officer. It is well known that great difficulty attends the county registration;

nothing proves it more than the fact that, notwithstanding the increase in the population and wealth of the country, the county registration is a decaying one. This must always be the case if you surround it with every obstacle. We propose to amend that system entirely; we propose, in fact, that there shall be a self-acting registry. The overseer in every parish will make out a list of owners as well as occupiers. I believe there will be no difficulty whatever in doing it, and clauses will be found in the Bill to ensure its accomplishment. If any one is omitted from the list, whether owner or occupier, he may make his claim, and in a supplementary list his name will be inserted and sent to the clerk of the peace, and the revising barrister. That is the great change we propose with regard to registration. There are further regulations of considerable importance, but I have still some other points to allude to; and though the House has treated me with much indulgence, I feel I must not dwell on this head.

Now, being registered, how is the elector to vote? We wish to put an end to those scandals that have of late years been discussed in the House, and the bitter feelings and controversies raised by the question—Are the travelling expenses of electors to be paid by the candidates? Is there no mode of terminating for ever what may be a scandal, and is always a controversy? When we are reconstructing the constituent body of the country, and completing its representation in this House, is it not the fitting occasion to make an effort, not merely to improve the registration, but to insure the registered vote being given in the simplest and safest manner we can devise? We propose, in the first place, that the number of polling places throughout the country shall be greatly increased. We propose that in every parish containing 200 electors there shall be a polling

place. If a parish does not contain 200 electors, then it will form one of a group reaching that number, which will have a polling place. Every man who votes will vote at the place where he resides, wherever his qualification may be. To effect that object, there will not only be a qualification register, but a residence register. It may be said that these additional polling places will be a great expense to candidates; but the Bill provides that candidates shall not bear the expense of them. If left to the candidate the expense would be very heavy; if left to the county it will be very little. Where there is a petty Sessions, there is generally a Police Station, or a room that may be hired; and there are provisions in the Bill which will satisfy hon. Gentlemen that this can be effected in a reasonably cheap manner.

If a man chooses to vote as he always has voted, he may go to the polling place of his district and do so; but we propose also to allow the elector to vote, though he may not choose to go to the poll, that he may vote by what are called voting papers. This is not an experiment, or a thing adopted for the first time,—there is nothing empirical about it. For many years the people of this country have been familiar with it: in the election of Poor Law Guardians, the votes are taken by voting papers; the Metropolis Act, recently passed by the House, provides that the elections under it may be taken by voting papers. What is the result of giving this supplementary power to a constituency? Why, it renders the expression of public opinion more complete than under the existing system. Of the constituent body under the Poor Law Act, 90 per cent. records its votes; but, in the great electoral body of England called on to elect the representatives of the British people, and form this famous House of Parliament, that affects the opinions of the world, how is that high privilege treated? Not more than 50 or

60 per cent. of that constituency records its votes in the performance of that solemn duty.

But it may be said, voting by papers may lead to personation; as if there was no personation now! In the history of man there never was any improvement proposed which the interests and passions of some would not distort; we believe the electors can vote by polling papers without personation, and in an honest and satisfactory manner. Sir, I shall always go myself to the hustings; but if a man wishes to vote for his Member by a voting paper, instead of going to the hustings, I see no objection to his being allowed to do so. All he will have to do is to write to the public officer and ask for a voting paper, the form of which will be found in the schedule of this Bill. A voting paper will be sent to him by the public officer in a registered letter; and, therefore, you will have evidence of its transmission. He will sign this paper in the presence of two witnesses, one of whom must be a householder, and then return it to the public officer, also in a registered letter. Thus we shall have evidence of its transmission both ways; and the paper will be opened before the proper authorities, and the man's vote will be duly recorded. I believe a vote given by this instrumentality may be honestly and properly given, and that there will be no more deception or personation practised under this machinery than under the open system which at present prevails. But lest there should be any personation, we provide against it by making it a misdemeanour under this Bill.

I have now placed before the House—much more briefly than I ought, perhaps, to have done, but they will pardon me if, in consequence of the largeness of the theme, I may omit some of the details which will be found in the Bill,—I have now placed before you the leading features of what we propose to do with the registration of the constituent body,

and the method in which their votes shall be taken. I have next to touch upon a certainly not less important portion of my subject. In attempting to deal with the question popularly designated Parliamentary Reform, Her Majesty's Government have endeavoured, so far as their intelligence could guide them, to offer a proposition to the House which, consistently with their conception of the principles upon which the English Constitution is founded, should secure for this country a complete representation. One of our first considerations was, of course, the electoral body, upon which I have treated at such length. But a complete representation does not depend merely upon the electoral body, however varied you may make its elements, however homogeneous its character. It also depends upon whether, in your system, the different interests of the country are adequately represented. Now, discarding for ever that principle of population upon which it has been my duty to make some remarks; accepting it as a truth that the function of this House is to represent not the views of a numerical majority—not merely the gross influence of a predominant property, but the varied interests of the country, we have felt that on this occasion it was incumbent on us diligently and even curiously to investigate the whole of England, and see whether there were interests not represented in this House whose views we should wish to be heard here; and whether the general representation of the country could be matured and completed. In undertaking this office, it must not be supposed that we have been animated by a feeling that we would only do that which the hard necessity of the case required. Had we been so influenced, it is possible we might have brought forward a measure that would have served the purpose of the moment, and yet left seeds behind us which might have germinated in future troubles,

controversies, and anxieties. We have been sincerely desirous to adapt the scheme of 1832 to the England of 1859, and to induce the House to come to a general settlement, whether as regards the exercise of the franchise or the direct representation in this House of the various interests of the community, which should take this question for a long period out of the agitating thoughts of men. We have sought to offer to the country, in the hope that it will meet with its calm and serious approval, what we believe to be a just and—I will not say a final but—conclusive settlement. Finality, Sir, is not the language of politics. But it is our duty to propose an arrangement which, as far as the circumstances of the age in which we live can influence our opinion, will be a conclusive settlement. And we have laid it down as our task to consider, without any respect to persons, what we honestly think are the interests of the country that are not represented, but which we should at this moment counsel the House to add to their numbers.

I venture to divide this branch of the subject into the cases where there is a want of representation, and those where a representation exists, but not an adequate one. We find both of these circumstances characteristic of the West Riding of Yorkshire and South Lancashire. There, there are distinct interests which are not represented in this House, and some also which are very inadequately represented. I mean by the term 'inadequately represented,' to say that there are several distinct interests, while the present Members are returned to this House by the predominant interest; the other interests, which are considerable enough to challenge and claim our consideration, being virtually unrepresented. We propose, therefore, to add to the representation of the West Riding of Yorkshire four Members. Here I will not speak of population or property, because

we are not about to offer a proposition to the House formed merely upon population or property. In the West Riding we find a great territory seventy miles in length, which is purely agricultural. We find another great division studded with towns, none of them important enough, or having distinctive interests powerful enough to be represented, yet in their aggregate constituting a wonderful hive of industry and energy; and there is still another portion of the West Riding where there are blended and varied interests. We propose, therefore, to add four Members to the West Riding of Yorkshire, and to divide it, not according to a mathematical arrangement as to population, but according to its separate interests. This principle of division will be in accordance with the local demarcations of wapentakes.* If property be the test, the property here is identical; for, however varied is the number of their population, the property of the wapentakes is as follows:—We propose that there should be a West Yorkshire, with a population of 472,000. That is the division in which you will find Keighley, Dewsbury, and a score of towns which you cannot summon here, but which, if you adopt these principles for your constituent body, would be voting for county Members; and therefore they ought to vote with the distinct interest with which they are connected. We propose that there shall be a North-West Yorkshire, with a population of 129,000, and a South Yorkshire, with one of 225,000. We propose these divisions, instead of an endless division and sub-division without names, which is little in harmony with our habits, and because these are the names which are used in the locality. With regard to the property of these divi-

* A division of certain northern counties, particularly those beyond the Trent, answering to what in other places was called a *hundred*. The word is derived from the Anglo-Saxon, and signifies a touching, or delivery of arms. (See *Rees' Cyc.*, &c.)—ED.

sions, varying as they do in interest and population, its amount is almost identical in each. In one of them the annual assessment to the county rate is £963,000, in another £809,000, and in the third £808,000.

We propose to add two Members to South Lancashire—that is to say, we propose to distribute the county of Lancashire into three divisions. One will be the hundred of West Derby, and one the hundred of Salford. These divisions are the same as those proposed by the noble Lord the Member for London, except that one of the hundreds of North Lancashire was inserted in West Derby in his Bill, and it now remains with North Lancashire. This will be an addition of six to the number of county Members.

There is another county to which we propose to add two Members—that is the county of Middlesex—which we propose to divide. By dividing Middlesex, the claims of Kensington, and Chelsea, and Hammersmith, and other suburban districts, the claims of which have been urged in this House, will be provided for. They will form part of South Middlesex, while the distinctive interests of the other portion of the county, the northern division, will also be represented in this House. These are all the additions that we propose to make to the representation of the counties—eight Members.

It is now, Sir, my duty to call the attention of the House to those places which, because they possess distinct interests, which are not duly represented in this House, ought, in our opinion, to be represented here. The first place which, in our opinion ought to be represented in the House of Commons is the town of Hartlepool and its immediate district. There is no place in England more distinguished by the energy of its inhabitants, its rapid progress, and the character of its industry. In North Durham there are four great towns which are represented, and there are two county Members;

in South Durham there are two county Members and no town which is represented. I will not dwell on the population of Hartlepool; I will not rest the granting of a Member on that basis, though the population is very considerable—upwards of 30,000; but I rest it upon the rapid development of its considerable industry, and the very fact that at this moment its importation of foreign goods is larger than that even of Newcastle. We, therefore, propose that there should be a Member for Hartlepool. For the same reason that it is a place where the shipping and mercantile interest of the country are conspicuous, we are of opinion that Birkenhead ought to be represented. There is a part of Staffordshire which we think deserves and requires the consideration of this House. It is that district which is called "The Black Country," where an immense distinctive industry has arisen since the passing of the Reform Act; and we therefore propose that West Bromwich and Wednesbury shall return a Member to this House. I said that we had allotted only two additional Members to South Lancashire, because we thought that there were two towns in that county whose interests require to be represented in this House, and therefore we recommend that Members should be allotted to Burnley and Stalybridge. That will be five additional borough Members.

Turning now to the South of England, we find a place in Surrey, which ought to be represented—namely Croydon; and in the county of Kent we propose that a Member should be allotted to Gravesend—a very ancient town, with a distinctive character, and in every sense of the word, I think, entitled to a representative. Now, Sir, I will not say we have studied the map of England—we have done more than that; at this moment I declare that, if you are to complete the representation of England according to the principle

which influences Her Majesty's Ministers—the principle that this House is to represent not the numerical majority, but the interests of the country—I do not see any other Member required to complete that representation; and I believe that if we have erred, we have erred rather by anticipating the destiny of what I believe will in time be great and thriving communities.

Well, Sir, how are these fifteen Members to be supplied? That is the question. They are to be supplied in the spirit of the English Constitution. Adopting a policy which has been recognised on previous occasions, and which for two centuries has been adopted by the Sovereigns and Parliaments of England—assuming, in which I hope I am correct, that it is the opinion of this House that its Members ought not to be increased, we must find the means of representing these new interests as means have been found before under similar circumstances and in the same constitutional spirit. It is sometimes said that there are constituencies in this country so small that it is an indefensible anomaly to permit them to exist. ['Hear, hear!' *and a laugh.*] I entirely disagree with the Gentleman who cheered me. I do not think that better arguments can be urged in favour of a constituency of 1,000 than one of 500; and I should be very much surprised if the hon. Gentleman, ingenious as he may be, could urge them. There are, it is true, some constituencies which certainly cannot be defended if the numerical majority is to govern England; but there are some very small constituencies which may perform a very important part in the representation of the principles upon which the English Constitution is founded, which are still upheld in this House, and still revered in this country. I will take an instance. In all those rattling schemes of disfranchisement with which we were favoured during the autumn, when every gentleman

thought that he could sit down at his table and reconstruct the venerable fabric of the English Constitution—if there was one point more than another on which these Utopian meddlers agreed—if there was one enemy which they were all resolved to hunt to death—it was the borough of Arundel. There every vice of the system seemed to be congregated—a small population, a small constituency, absolute nomination. Well, now, Sir, that is very well for autumnal agitation; but let us see how it practically works in this ancient and famous community in which it is our pride and privilege to live. There are 900,000 Roman Catholics in England, scattered and dispersed in every town and county,—of course a minority. What means have they of being represented in this House, especially in the present, as I deem it, unfortunate state of feeling in England with regard to our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects. There is one English Roman Catholic Member of Parliament, a man who bears a name that will ever be honoured by England and Englishmen: and practically, and in the spirit of the English constitution, the 900,000 Roman Catholics of England, men, many of them of ancient lineage and vast possessions, whose feelings all must respect, even if they do not agree with them in every particular, find a representative in the borough of Arundel. That is the practical working of our constitution. You talk of the small numbers of the constituency of Arundel,—900,000 Roman Catholics! Why, it is more than the West Riding of Yorkshire; it is double the Tower Hamlets.

Therefore, Sir, we are not to say, because a constituency is small, that is the source from which we must inevitably draw the constitutional means of completing the representation of England. The House will do me the justice of observing that by the measure which, on the part of the

Government, I have placed before them to-night, whatever arrangements may be made with existing boroughs to find means of effecting the representation of interests not represented without increasing the numbers of this House, no man will be disfranchised. By adopting this principle of identity of suffrage, even if a man loses the Member who has represented his borough, he still may go to the poll or send his voting paper; and, under all circumstances, that is a compensation which was never offered in previous schemes of Parliamentary Reform. We do not feel it our duty to recommend to Parliament that any borough represented by a single Member, like Arundel, should lose that Member. We want, in order to complete the representation of the country, fifteen seats in this House. To procure those seats we must fix upon some rule that must necessarily be arbitrary. The only condition that the House has a right to make, and which all should be glad to concede, is that that rule should be impartially applied. In the last census, if you throw your eye over its Parliamentary results, you will find that there are fifteen boroughs represented by two Members each, and the population of which is under 6,000. Only fifteen boroughs? It will be an admirable opportunity for a display of patriotism—an opportunity seldom offered by the circumstances and occasions of society—to the Members of those places. I have no personal feeling on this subject. I do most sincerely and ardently hope that when there is a new Parliament we may all meet again; but if these fifteen boroughs now represented by two Members each, though with a population under 6,000, would consent, without our using force to compel them, to make this concession, we should complete the representation of the country according to the principles that I believe to be those upon which our representation ought to rest.

Therefore, Sir, in the Bill, which soon will be in the hands of Members, there are provisions that the fifteen boroughs in question shall in the next Parliament be represented by only one Member each. [*Cries of* 'Name, name!'] The House, I am sure, will consider my feelings. I shall take care that every Gentleman, I hope to-morrow morning, will receive the schedule containing the names of these boroughs; but I see no necessity, while I think it would be invidious, to mention them now. [*Cries of* 'No, no!' and 'Name!'] I regret to be compelled to introduce personal details into this statement; but as the House insists upon it, I suppose I must read the boroughs which, at present represented by two Members, are in future to return only one each. They are Honiton, Thetford, Totnes, Harwich, Evesham, Wells, Richmond, Marlborough, Leominster, Lymington, Ludlow, Andover, Knaresborough, Tewkesbury, and Maldon.

I have now, Sir, touched upon those topics which it was my duty to lay before the House this evening. I have omitted many things that I ought to have said, and I have no doubt I may have said some things that I ought to have omitted. Such errors are inevitable in treating so large and so various a theme, but I am sure the House will remember that there will be many opportunities for me to enter into necessary explanations, and will treat an occasion like the present with generous forbearance. Sir, having described as clearly as I could the principal provisions of our Bill to the House, I shall say no more. I believe that this is a measure wise, prudent, and adequate to the occasion. I earnestly hope the House may adopt it. I believe, Sir, it is a Conservative measure, using that epithet in no limited or partial sense, but in the highest and holiest interpretation of which it is capable. I can say sincerely that those who

framed this measure are men who reverence the past, are proud of the present, but are confident of the future. Such as it is, I now submit it for the consideration of the House of Commons, convinced that they will deal with it as becomes the representatives of a wise and understanding people.

THE PRINCE CONSORT.

CONCLUSION OF A SPEECH IN SUPPORT OF THE ADDRESS TO HER MAJESTY ON THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS' SPEECH.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, FEBRUARY 6, 1862.

NO person can be insensible to the fact that the House meets to-night under circumstances very much changed from those which have attended our assembling for many years. Of late years, indeed for more than twenty years past, whatever may have been our personal rivalries, and whatever our party strife, there was at least one sentiment in which we all coincided, and that was a sentiment of admiring gratitude to that Throne whose wisdom and whose goodness had so often softened the acerbities of our free public life, and had at all times so majestically represented the matured intelligence of an enlightened people. Sir, all that is changed. He is gone who was "the comfort and support" of that Throne.

It has been said that there is nothing which England so much appreciates as the fulfilment of duty. The Prince whom we have lost not only was eminent for the fulfilment of duty, but it was the fulfilment of the highest duty under the most difficult circumstances. Prince Albert was the Consort of his Sovereign: he was the father of one who

might be his Sovereign: he was the Prime Councillor of a realm the political constitution of which did not even recognise his political existence. Yet under these circumstances, so difficult and so delicate, he elevated even the Throne by the dignity and purity of his domestic life. He framed and partly accomplished a scheme of education for the heir of England which proved how completely its august projector had contemplated the office of an English King. In the affairs of State, while his serene spirit and his elevated position bore him above all the possible bias of our party life, he showed on every occasion all the resources, all the prudence, and all the sagacity of an experienced and responsible statesman.

Sir, I have presumed to touch upon three instances in which there was on the part of Prince Albert a fulfilment of duty—duty of the highest character, under circumstances of the greatest difficulty. I will venture to touch upon another point in his character equally distinguished by fulfilment of duty, but in which the duty was not only fulfilled, but was created. Although when he was adopted by this country, he was, after all, but a youth of tender years, such was the character of his mind—at once observing and contemplative—that in due season he discovered that notwithstanding all those great achievements which long centuries of internal concord and public liberty had permitted the energy and enterprise of Englishmen to achieve, there was still a great deficiency in our national character, which, if neglected, might lead to the impairing not only of our social happiness, but even of the sources of our public wealth. That was a deficiency of culture. But he was not satisfied with detecting a want, he resolved to supply it. His plans were deeply laid; they were maturely prepared; and notwithstanding the obstacles which he inevitably encountered, I

am prepared to say they were eminently successful. What might have been his lot had his term completed that which is ordained as the average life of man, it might be presumption to predict. Perhaps he would have impressed upon his age not only his character, but his name. But this, at least, posterity must admit, that he heightened the intellectual and moral standard of this country; that he extended and expanded the sympathies of classes; and that he most beneficially and intimately adapted to the productive powers of England the inexhaustible resources of science and art.

Sir, it is sometimes deplored by those who admired and loved him, that he was thwarted occasionally in his undertakings, and that he was not duly appreciated. But these are not circumstances for regret, but for congratulation. They prove the leading and original mind which has so long and so advantageously laboured for this country. Had he not encountered these obstacles, had he not been subject to this occasional distrust and misconception, it would only have shown that he was a man of ordinary mould and temper. Those who improve must change, those who change must necessarily disturb and alarm men's prejudices. What he had to encounter was only a demonstration that he was a man superior to his age, and therefore admirably adapted for the work of progress.

There is one other point, and one only, on which I will presume for a moment to dwell, and it is not for the sake of you, Sir, or those who now hear me, or of the generation to which we belong, but it is that those who come after us may not misunderstand the nature of this illustrious man. Prince Albert was not a mere patron; he was not one of those who by their gold or by their smiles reward excellence or stimulate exertion. His contributions to the cause of State were far more powerful and far more precious. He

gave to it his thought, his time, his toil; he gave to it his life. On both sides and in all parts of the House I see many Gentlemen who occasionally have acted with the Prince at those Council Boards, where they conferred and consulted upon the great undertakings with which he was connected. I ask them, without fear of a denial, whether he was not the leading spirit, whether his was not the mind which foresaw the difficulty, his not the resources which supplied the remedy; whether his was not the courage which sustained them under apparently overpowering difficulties; whether every one who worked with him did not feel that he was the real originator of those plans of improvement which they assisted in carrying into effect.

But what avail these words? This House to-night has been asked to condole with the Crown upon this great calamity. No easy office. To condole, in general, is the office of those who, without the pale of sorrow, still feel for the sorrowing. But in this instance the country is as heart-stricken as its Queen. Yet in the mutual sensibility of a Sovereign and a people there is something ennobling—something which elevates the spirit beyond the level of mere earthly sorrow. The counties, the cities, and the corporations of the realm—those illustrious associations of learning and science, and art, and skill, of which he was the brightest ornament and the inspiring spirit, have bowed before the Throne. It does not become the Parliament of the country to be silent. The expression of our feelings may be late, but even in that lateness may be observed some propriety. To-night the two Houses sanction the expression of the public sorrow, and ratify, as it were, the record of a nation's woe.

ELECTION OF A SPEAKER—THE DEATH OF LORD PALMERSTON.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS, FEBRUARY 1, 1866.

I hope, Sir, I may be permitted, on behalf of Gentlemen on this side of the House, to offer you our congratulations on the event, so gratifying to the House, which has just occurred: and the more so, as from the mode in which the business of this morning has been conducted, you might, if I were silent, for a moment suppose that your elevation to the chair has been a matter of indifference to us. I believe I am expressing a very general feeling on their part, when I say that regret is felt here that your nomination to the chair was not seconded from this side. On the previous occasion that mode was followed. There are, I believe, other precedents for such a course of proceeding under such circumstances; and if precedents did not exist I think we ought to have made one, because this is an occasion on which the general and cordial feeling of the house could not be shown in too striking and significant a manner. You have to-day, Sir, been re-elected to the chair for the third time. I have myself always been of opinion that re-election to the chair is, in fact, a greater distinction than the original choice. Politi-

cal manœuvres and parliamentary passions may contrive to raise an individual to the elevated post you now occupy, but they cannot keep him there. For that result the possession of great and personal qualities is necessary—natural courtesy, adequate learning, firmness and impartiality, and, above all, that inspiring sense of honour which is our surest guide in the perplexities of public life, and which ever has been, and, I trust, ever will be, the characteristic of English gentlemen. It is because the House sees that you, Sir, possess those qualities that you have been re-elected to the chair for the third time this day; and it is because we feel on this side of the House that you possess those qualities, that I am authorised, on behalf of gentlemen here, to offer you the tribute of our respect and congratulation. I would not have said more, had it not been for some unexpected allusions made to another subject. The right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer alluded to increased responsibilities falling on him; but I can assure the right hon. Gentleman of that of which he need hardly be reminded; for, though he appears now for the first time as leader of this House, yet he has sat in it for many years, and been one of its most eminent and distinguished members; his experience, then, must have taught him that on all occasions, when the order and honour of this House are concerned, the leader of the House may appeal for support to those sitting opposite to him with the same confidence as to the members occupying seats on his own side. Sir, I quite agree with the right hon. Gentleman that there is one cause why on this occasion, in the responsible office which he now occupies, he may feel some distrust. I do not think that it is possible for us to re-assemble under this roof—many of us who have sat in all the Parliaments of the Queen, and some of us who have been mem-

bers of the House during three reigns—and not feel emotion when they remark that the familiar form, which you, Sir, have referred to, can no longer be observed among us—a form connected so intimately with the history of this country, and with the most important transactions of this House of Parliament. It is impossible to deny that the disappearance of such a character from the scene—of so much sagacity, of so much experience, and, I may say, of so much fame—must in some degree, and for some time, derogate from the authority even of the House of Commons. But, Sir, it is not on this occasion that I wish to refer to the character of a great statesman, but rather to the happy disposition of the man, which lent, indeed, a charm to the labours and anxieties of public life. By his good temper and good sense he facilitated the course of public business beyond what it is easy to ascertain, or even, perhaps, to imagine. I am sure it must be the general sentiment among us, that the influence over our debates will not soon cease of his genial experience and his moderating wisdom. But, notwithstanding this loss, I will express my hope that this present Parliament, in intelligence and public spirit, will not be inferior to the preceding Parliaments of this happy reign.

RICHARD COBDEN.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS, APRIL 3, 1865.

SIR, having been a Member of this House when Mr. Cobden first took his seat, and having remained in the House during the whole of his lengthened career, I cannot reconcile it to myself to be silent on this occasion, when we have to deplore the loss of one so eminent, and that too in the ripeness of his manhood and the full vigour of his intellect.

Although it was the fortune of Mr. Cobden to enter public life at a time when passions ran high, and he himself was by no means a man insensible to political excitement, still when the strife was over, there was soon observed in him a moderation and a tempered thought that indicated a large intellectual horizon, and the possession of statesmanlike qualities. Though formed in the tumult of popular opinions, with which he identified himself, there was in his character a vein of reverence for tradition which, even unconsciously to himself, subdued and softened the acerbity of the cruder conclusions at which he may have arrived. That in my mind is a quality which in some degree must be possessed by anyone who attempts or aspires to sway this country. For, notwithstanding the rapid changes amid which we live,

and the numerous improvements and alterations we anticipate, this country is still Old England, and the past is one of the elements of our power.

'What the qualities of Mr. Cobden were in this House all present are aware; yet, perhaps, I may be permitted to say that as a debater he had few equals. As a logician he was close and complete; adroit, acute, perhaps even subtle; yet at the same time he was gifted with such a degree of imagination that he never lost sight of the sympathies of those whom he addressed, and so, generally avoiding to drive his argument to extremity, he became as a speaker both practical and persuasive.

The noble Lord, who is far more competent than myself to deal with such subjects, has referred the House to Mr. Cobden's conduct as an administrator. It would seem that, notwithstanding the eminent position which he had achieved and occupied, and the various opportunities which offered for the exercise of that ambition which he might legitimately entertain, his life was destined to pass without his being afforded an occasion of showing that he possessed those qualities which are invaluable in council, and in the management of public affairs. Still, fortunately, it happened, that, before he quitted us, there came to him one of the finest opportunities that a public man could well enjoy, and it may truly be said that, by the transaction of great affairs, he obtained the consideration of the two leading countries of the world.

Sir, there is something mournful in the history of this Parliament, when we remember how many of our most eminent and valued public men have passed from among us. I cannot refer to the history of any other Parliament which will bear to posterity so fatal a record. But there is this consolation when we remember these unequalled and irreparable

visitations—that these great men are not altogether lost to us; that their opinions will be often quoted in this House, their authority appealed to, their judgments attested; even their very words will form part of our discussions and debates. There are some Members of Parliament who, though not present in the body, are still Members of this House; independent of dissolutions, of the caprice of constituencies, even of the course of time. I think, Sir, Mr. Cobden was one of these men. I believe that when the verdict of posterity shall be recorded on his life and conduct, it will be said of him that he was, without doubt, the greatest political character the pure middle class of this country has yet produced—an ornament to the House of Commons, and an honour to England.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS, FEBRUARY 25, 1867.

MR. SPEAKER,—In rising to move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to take into consideration the most important statute of modern times, it might for a moment be supposed that proposition was one condemnatory of the great Act of 1832. I can assure the House, however, that nothing is further from the intentions and from the feelings of Her Majesty's advisers. What they wish on the present occasion, if they have the opportunity, is to do that more efficiently, and not less sincerely, which they attempted in 1859, and that is to improve and complete the Reform Act.

Sir, the men who devised and carried the Reform Act of 1832, were statesmen, and their names will live in history. They encountered a great emergency, and they proved themselves equal to the occasion. A national party, a party which is nothing if it be not national, had by too long a possession of power shrunk into a heartless oligarchy. The Whig party

seized the occasion which was before them, and threw the Government of this country into the hands of the middle classes. Never, to my mind, was any political experiment more successful. Never has a country been better governed, to my mind, than England has been during the last thirty years. Never during a like period have the annals of the House of Commons been more resplendent. But, Sir, there was a deficiency in that Act—I will not say an intended deficiency, but one which certainly arose from want of useful information on an important part of a great question; and, perhaps, without any offence to the hon. Gentlemen opposite, I might say that omission was perhaps more naturally made by a party which, generally speaking, had built up their policy rather upon Liberal opinions than upon popular rights. The political rights of the working classes which existed before the Act of 1832, and which not only existed but were acknowledged, were on that occasion disregarded and even abolished, and during the whole period that has since elapsed, in consequence of the great vigour that has been given to the Government of this country, and of the multiplicity of subjects of commanding interest that have engaged and engrossed attention, no great inconvenience has been experienced from that cause. Still, during all that time there has been a feeling, sometimes a very painful feeling, that questions have arisen which have been treated in this House without that entire national sympathy which is desirable.

Well, Sir, it is our business on this occasion, in the first and most important place, to endeavour to offer some proposition to the House which will restore those rights that were lost in 1832 to the labouring class of the country, and which will bring back again that fair partition of political power which the old Constitution of the country recognised,

and which, if practicable, it seems to me that all of us are desirous should be accomplished.

There is a very great difference between the period of 1832 and the period of 1867. In the period of 1832 Parliamentary reform was a subject to fire the imaginations and excite the passions of all men. It was one which banded parties together with a heat and with a power such as very rarely occur. But on the present occasion there is great unanimity on the subject. We who have succeeded to the place which we occupy in the spirit of the Constitution, finding that question unsettled, and by universal consent requiring settlement, can appeal with confidence, as I now understand, to the candid interpretation of the House of Commons upon our plans and motives, and can count even on the support, of course the discriminating, but still the not less generous support, of our political rivals. Sir, with these feelings I shall endeavour to speak to those Resolutions which I placed only a fortnight ago upon the table of this House.* It is only a fortnight ago, that I asked the House to consider the propriety of permitting Her Majesty's Government to proceed on this subject by way of Resolution, and it was then more than doubtful whether that permission would be conceded. It has been said that the Resolutions placed upon the table are vague, and not intended to lead the House to any practical conclusion. My presence to-day, according to all Parliamentary practice, to give the explanations which the House has a right to expect, is a sufficient answer to that charge.

I confess for myself, Sir, that I cannot agree with those who in attempting to settle great questions begin by disregarding the importance of principles. It appears to me that it is of great importance, if we are endeavouring to bring about a general understanding in the House upon a

* Feb. 11th.

subject of great moment, that we should begin by seeing whether there is between us a sympathy on the principles on which that settlement is to be founded. And although I was never less inclined to enter into controversy with the House on any part of the subject before us, yet still, in vindication of the Government, I do not think the period fixed for the consideration of these Resolutions, which form a whole and are connected together, and which at least are the result of reflection and pains—I do not think that the period was unreasonable. Because what has been the practice under such circumstances? Gentlemen take these Resolutions, and endeavour themselves to see what they lead to, and what would be the practical results. They themselves make combinations and applications which fail, and some of which, perhaps, are partially successful; and when they find that the solution of the difficulty is not so easy as they imagine, they come, as it were, into a more practical state of mind, and at the right time they treat Her Majesty's Ministers with more candour, and aid them with more zealous co-operation.

I will first ask the House to consider that portion of the question which is, perhaps, immediately the most interesting, and which has occasioned of late years the most controversy in this House—namely, the state of the Borough Franchise. In considering this question our anxiety has been to widen, as far as we could, the right of exercising political suffrage, and, while retaining the general character of this House, and while we endeavour to give to the working classes their old share in the formation of Parliament, at the same time not derogating from that variety of character in this House which I believe to be so important, and the main foundation of our influence and authority. We have endeavoured, in considering the question, to see whether we could not im-

prove and increase the suffrage for boroughs, with a due regard to three important qualities—capital, intelligence, and labour. With this view we have resolved to recommend the House to adopt four new franchises in boroughs. These four franchises have no novelty to recommend them, or to alarm the House, for I believe they have on several occasions been the subject of our discussions, and in all instances they have experienced a very favourable reception from the House.

The first new franchise that we wish to establish would be an educational franchise. In 1859 we introduced a Bill in which we proposed to give the suffrage to the graduates of all Universities, to the members of all the learned professions, to clergymen and ministers of religion, to certificated schoolmasters, and others. I should myself wish to see such a suffrage extended. In the present Resolutions, or in the Bill which, if the Resolutions are sanctioned, it will be my duty to bring in, that franchise would to a certain degree be extended, although not to that degree to which some would wish to see it carried. I believe, however, that under it a considerable number of persons, comparatively speaking, would exercise the franchise who otherwise would not enjoy it. To that point I will advert afterwards.

The next new franchise that we wish to establish is a savings-bank franchise. That is a franchise which has always been favourably considered, and which has been included in almost every project of Parliamentary reform of late years, but to which one objection of considerable importance has been urged, and that is, that it is very difficult to establish and register the names of those who would be qualified under it. We hope to be able to lay a plan before the House which will be found easy and practical, and to render that franchise self-adjusting. In that

case it will be a very satisfactory and important franchise. We propose that a qualification of £30 in the savings-bank, with a retention of it for one year, which is a necessary condition, should be the subject of the second franchise.

While the third new franchise that we should propose would be established on public property. So that any person who has £50 in the debt of the country—in the public funds—should be entitled to a vote.

The fourth new franchise is one founded upon the payment of direct taxation. We propose that every person who pays 20s. a year direct taxation shall have a vote to elect members of Parliament. These are the four new franchises that we propose. I will give the House the numbers that the Government believe will register and record their votes under the savings-bank franchise—not the numbers that may appear on the first blush qualified to vote under that new franchise, because that would be deceptive. But we believe that under the £30 savings-bank qualification in boroughs there will at this moment be 35,000 persons who will register and record their votes. [Sir G. Grey.—"Having no other qualification?"] Yes, having no other qualification. We believe that under the education franchise in boroughs there will be 10,000 persons and under the funded property qualification there will be 7,000 persons, while the direct taxpayers will not be less than 30,000 persons entitled to vote.

Having stated the new franchises proposed for boroughs, I will ask the House to consider the question of the re-adjustment of the old franchise. The Resolutions which I have placed upon the table are connected together, and I wish to call the attention of the House to the fifth Resolution. What is expressed in the fifth Resolution is the belief of the Government that "the principle of plurality of votes,

if adopted by Parliament, would facilitate the settlement of the Borough Franchise on an extensive basis." I wish to make an observation on that resolution. In the first place a very great error has prevailed as to the meaning which the Government associated with this plurality of voting. Our intention was that any person who possessed one of the four new franchises that I have mentioned, if he were an occupier in a borough or if he had a right to vote for a member of Parliament, should vote, not merely for the occupation qualification, but also for any one other of the new franchises which he might possess. We believe that if that principle were adopted, it might have led to results very satisfactory to large numbers of the people of this country; but we are bound to state frankly, that this is not a view of the case which, if we are permitted to bring in a Bill, we shall at all insist upon. It seems to us that it is not desirable to make any proposition on these questions which we have not a fair prospect of carrying to a successful issue, and, therefore, although I myself believe that it is a principle well worthy of our consideration, for it involves nothing invidious in its character, applying alike to all classes, yet it is not one which I am now in any way recommending to the House, or announcing that we should act upon if we had permission to bring in a Bill. It is, however, necessary that I should speak frankly to the House on the subject of the fifth Resolution.

Then, Sir, having been obliged to give up acting upon that Resolution, we had to consider the basis on which, in our opinion, Parliament should fix the Borough Franchise so far as occupation is concerned. It must be remembered that Parliament has asserted the principle of rating as the basis of our electoral system. It must be remembered, also, in offering the general views of the Government on the mat-

ter, that we have placed the assertion of that principle among the Resolutions on the table of the House; and, therefore, I will assume that on that subject there is now no question. We have, then, to fix upon some franchise with regard to the boroughs of which rating shall be the basis; and our object being that we should fix upon an authentic basis—one not nominally of ratepayers, but, as far as possible, really of ratepayers—that we should have some resting point to remain upon, and rating being now, as I hope it will be, accepted as the basis of our whole electoral system, we should recommend the House, having relinquished our fifth Resolution, to adjust the occupation franchise in boroughs upon a £6 rating basis. It now devolves upon me to show to the House what will be the effect upon the number of the constituency of the new franchises which we have proposed, and of the readjustment of the occupation franchise in boroughs which I have just mentioned.

I must again remind the House that the numbers which I place before them are the numbers which Her Majesty's Government believe will really be added to the roll. We make all due allowance for those who do not register, and all due deductions for other classes, in respect of which I will not now weary the House. But we believe that with a £6 rating franchise, the number qualified being, I think, 203,000, there would be new voters to the number of 140,000. But we must make a deduction of 10,000 from that, because probably that proportion may be already qualified as electors. Therefore we place the number of new voters under a £6 franchise in boroughs at 130,000. We place the savings-bank voters at 35,000; we place the direct taxation voters at 30,000; the funded property qualification voters at 7,000; and the educational franchise voters at 10,000—making altogether 212,000, which is the

number that, in our opinion, will practically be added to the constituency of the boroughs.

It will now be my duty to call the attention of the House to what we propose with respect to the county franchise. We propose, in the first place, to extend to the counties the four new sub-franchises which I have already mentioned; and the effect of this upon the counties will be to add to the constituency by direct taxation 52,000, by funded property 13,000, by the educational franchise 15,000, and by the savings-bank qualification 25,000 voters. I must here remark, both with reference to the county and the borough franchise which depends on the savings-banks, that all these estimates are made upon the old savings-banks. There is no return yet of the Post-office savings-banks; but of course in time, if that national institution advances and prospers, it will have a very sensible effect upon this matter. Extending, then, to the counties those four new franchises, we propose to reduce the occupation franchise in counties to £20. [Mr. Gladstone:—"Will that also be founded upon rating?"] It will be founded upon rating. This will add, after all deductions, to the occupiers having votes in counties, 82,500. The whole of the increase to the constituency of the country, in round numbers, will be 400,000.

The House will now permit me to advert to one of the Resolutions not strictly in the order in which it is placed on the paper, but on which it would be more convenient for the general management of this subject that I should at once touch; and that is the Resolution to which an amendment has been given notice of—viz., No. 9—which declares "That it is expedient that provision should be made for the better prevention of bribery and corruption at elections." Sir, I have heard that in dealing with this subject

we have only ourselves to blame, because we thoughtlessly, and, perhaps, incautiously, supported an Hon. Baronet, a Member of this House, in the last Session of Parliament, in a resolution which we must now find very inconvenient to us. [An Hon. Member.—"Hear, hear."] Sir, I can only say to those who have made that observation, and to the hon. Gentleman who cheers it, that they are under a very great mistake. After what happened not only before that resolution was passed, but after what has occurred subsequently and recently in this country, I think that any Ministry, of whatever party it might be formed, would not be doing its duty to its Sovereign and its country if it did not attempt vigorously to grapple with this question of bribery and corruption. And, Sir, we have given to it our anxious attention, and are perfectly prepared to act upon the conclusions at which we have arrived. This is not the occasion upon which it would, I am sure, be agreeable to the House to enter into minute details on such a subject; but I may, perhaps, advert to one or two of the principal conclusions to which we have come, and which we shall recommend the House to adopt in regard to it.

In the first place, it is our opinion—and we hope that we may induce the House to agree with that opinion—that after an election, if the decision within two months is challenged, either by the candidate who was defeated or by the electors, he or they shall be empowered to serve the returning-officer with their protest; that when that protest has been received the returning-officer shall communicate it to the proper authorities—the clerk at the table, for example, Mr. Speaker, or it may be the Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas; and that then these authorities should have the power immediately to authorize the despatch of two assessors to the spot, to hold their court, and con-

duct their examination at the locality, and there decide upon the question at issue. Of course, these assessors are not to be sent—that protest is not to be acted upon, unless the persons making it enter into their recognizances to bear the necessary expenses of the investigation. And as we are unwilling in any way to diminish the jurisdiction of this House, or to take its real business from out of its bosom, in case we give an appeal from the decision of the assessors, we propose that it should be given in this way—that the person decided against may make his appeal to this House, and that this House may, if it thinks fit, appoint a Select Committee to investigate the question. The decision of the assessors will remain fifteen days on the table. If it is not questioned it will be acted upon; if it is questioned, the person who questions it and makes the appeal must, of course, again enter into his recognizances to bear the necessary expenses, and it will be open to the House, if it thinks proper, to act upon that appeal. The next conclusion upon this matter which we shall recommend the House to adopt is to declare that, when a candidate has been convicted of bribery, the other candidate, whose conduct is proved to have been pure, although he may have been in a minority, shall be returned to this House.

Sir, these are two important recommendations to which, from a desire not to weary the House, I have done very imperfect justice; because, of course, all these regulations are very much matter of detail; but I hope that I have succeeded in conveying to the House the general results at which we have arrived. We believe that their consequences will be very considerable upon the conduct of the constituencies, and also of the Members of this House. (An Hon. Member.—"What about the punishment?"] I would rather decline to enter at the present moment into the

subject of punishments, and prefer to leave it till this branch of the question is more specifically before the House. I hope, although this is a subject involving very great difficulty, that we may be able to arrive at certain conditions by which inveterately corrupt boroughs shall after a certain time, and after the fulfilment of those conditions, by their own conduct lose, as a matter of course, the power of returning Members to Parliament. If the resolutions are passed, and it should fall to our lot to bring in a Bill, we shall be perfectly ready to act upon this question of corruption by introducing clauses to carry these propositions, or propositions of an analogous character, into effect. But it will be for the House to decide whether they shall be adopted. I cannot conceal from the House that this is a subject which must lead to prolonged controversy, and as it is no doubt their desire that a Bill affecting the representation of the people in Parliament should be carried, I will not say with precipitation, but at least, without any unnecessary delay, it will be for them to decide whether it is to be dealt with in that or in a separate measure. I can assure the House that the Government are prepared to fulfil, not only in the letter, but in the spirit, the engagements which were entered into on this question last Session, and to which they themselves were a party. If the House should be of opinion that it would encumber the Franchise and Distribution Bill or the other subjects which must necessarily enter into a measure of Parliamentary Reform too much to couple with them this matter, all I can say is that I will personally undertake to bring in a separate Bill dealing with it on the very same night, so that the passing of the Franchise and Distribution Bill would be disembarrassed of the delay which might otherwise take place.

The subject on which I have just treated leads me to the

consideration of those venal boroughs which have of late so much engaged the painful attention of the country. It is the opinion of the Government that no delay should occur in enabling the House to decide on the position of those boroughs, and that is a very relevant part of the task which if these Resolutions pass we are prepared to undertake. The boroughs to which I refer are Great Yarmouth, returning two Members; Lancaster, returning two Members; Totnes, returning two Members; and Reigate, returning one Member, to Parliament. The Government have given to this part of the question anxious and painful consideration, and they think that it is their duty to recommend the disfranchisement of the whole of those boroughs, and to transfer the seven seats thus rendered vacant to towns which have risen into importance since the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832. Those seven seats would not, of course, meet all the fair claims to the distinction of being represented in this House which might be urged; but on that subject, notwithstanding the communications which I have had made to me, the Government have been guided by the principles and feelings which are expressed in the 7th and 8th Resolutions. We have, in fact, in considering the question of distribution, entirely been influenced by the consideration of enfranchisement and not disfranchisement. We are alive to the great difficulty, and even the great danger, of rashly, recklessly, and thoughtlessly interfering with the representative system of a society so old, so complicated, and now so vast and various as that of the British Empire. We are unwilling to disturb any centre of representation, our main consideration being that in the revision of our electoral system—which must necessarily be periodical, however distant from one another the periods—we should confine

ourselves as far as we possibly can to giving representation to those places which ought to be, and are not, represented, duly maintaining at the same time that balance between the various interests in this House which, I believe, the majority of us are anxious to preserve.

We have anxiously examined all the claims for representation which can upon any reasonable ground be advanced by the several communities which have risen into importance since 1832, and we have naturally, in coming to a decision upon the subject, been influenced by a triple consideration—in a great degree by population, by the distinctive interests of that population, and lastly, by locality. We are desirous, as far as we can, to maintain the distribution of representation over the country, because we feel that unequal distribution must lead to discontent. We have endeavoured to provide that each distinctive interest in towns should be fairly represented, and the towns which, after the most anxious and careful investigation, we will, if the Resolutions should pass and we have the opportunity, recommend to Parliament to enfranchise, are Hartlepool, Darlington, Burnley, Staleybridge, St. Helen's, Dewsbury, Barnsley, and Middlesborough. I stop at the next, and the House will, I trust, not ask me to mention its name. We wish to give a Member to what is called the "Black Country." In our own Bill of 1859, as well as in the Bill of the late Government, a provision of that kind was introduced. To reconcile a rating basis and a mining population is, however, a difficult task. So many and such contradictory representations from different localities have been made to me, and I have been asked so anxiously and upon such good grounds not to precipitate the determination of the Government on this point, that I am sure the House, always anxious for fair play, will allow me to describe the

town to which I am now adverting as one in the Black Country.

The remaining towns which we propose to enfranchise are Croydon, Gravesend, and Torquay. The House will perceive that the North of England—and that very properly—has a very large share in this appropriation, and we think it extremely desirable that if there are towns of sufficient importance in the South their claims to representation should also be acknowledged. We look, therefore, upon the enfranchisement of Croydon, Gravesend, and Torquay as only fair and just. Before I leave the question of boroughs I will mention that it is the intention of the Government, if they should have the opportunity, to recommend to Parliament to divide the Tower Hamlets and give to each division two Members. In so doing it will of course be necessary to provide that its boundaries should not be allowed to remain exactly as they were left by the Act of 1832, but that they should be adapted to the requirements of the present population. It seems to us extremely desirable that communities so populous and extensive should be made the basis of an increased representation. By these means fourteen Members will be given to boroughs.

I now come to another part of the important subject of Distribution. The House has acknowledged that the counties in England are inadequately represented. No one, I may add, has acknowleged that to be the case more explicitly than Earl Russell himself. I remember it was from this very place that he did me the honour of stating that in one of his numerous Reform Bills he had given increased representation to the counties in consequence of the remarks which I had offered on the subject. The result, too, of our deliberations year after

year, has, I think, convinced the House and the country that it is important the counties should receive a more adequate representation than they now possess. We are about greatly to increase the representation of towns, and we must bear in mind that in doing so we must diminish in a considerable degree the representative power of some of the smaller boroughs, which are generally supposed to furnish an indirect compensation to the counties for their entirely inadequate representation.

What we propose, therefore, is that we should take certain counties and divide them, giving in each case a constituency composed, irrespective of the boroughs, of a pure county population, numbering 100,000, to the new Members thus created. The counties to the division of which we mean to ask the assent of the House are North Lancashire, North Lincolnshire, West Kent, East Surrey, Middlesex, South Staffordshire, and South Devon. We shall, if these proposals are adopted, have 14 new Members for counties and 14 for boroughs, while the number of seats with which we intend to ask the House to deal is 30. How 28 of these are to be appropriated I have just explained; the remaining two we would dispose of as follows:—We propose to carry out a scheme which was offered to the consideration of the House in 1859, and which, though the measure in which it was embraced was not passed, received the entire approval of the House. I allude to our proposal to divide South Lancashire, as well as to give a Member to Birkenhead. Although that proposal was not then carried into effect, the vacancy created in certain seats two or three years afterwards furnished the House with an opportunity of reconsidering the matter, and so irresistible were the claims of Birkenhead found to be—those of South Lancashire being also very great—that a compromise was made by giving a Member to

Birkenhead and an additional Member to South Lancashire. We propose that South Lancashire should be divided, and this will make 29 Members. We also propose that the House should recognise the claims of the London University.

I have now explained the Distribution of Seats proposed by the Government. Fourteen Members are given to boroughs, and I earnestly hope and fervently believe that Parliament will never have any cause to regret the transference of the franchise to the new boroughs. Notwithstanding all that has taken place, I believe that the real opinion of this country is opposed to the practice of bribery at elections, and I believe, too, that these communities will repudiate such practices. I expect with confidence that their Members, on whatever side they may sit, will add to the honour and utility of this House. There are, according to the list I have read, 15 Members given to the counties, and they, no doubt, must be, considering their constituencies, men of very great importance. The presumption, therefore, is that they will add to the strength and reputation of the House of Commons.

I may remark that in proposing the division of Middlesex we are proposing a plan which will, at last, give more peculiar representation to Kensington, Chelsea, Hammersmith, and the populous districts in those neighbourhoods. Therefore, to the claims both of the West and East of London, which are at present most inadequately or not at all represented, the plan of the Government will afford some satisfaction. We can only carry this plan into effect by availing ourselves of the seven seats justly forfeited in the opinion of the whole House and the country, and by appealing to the patriotism and public spirit of some of the smaller boroughs in the country. The principle of this

plan — a principle which I trust will always be adopted in this House — is never wholly to disfranchise, except on account of corruption, and those boroughs, therefore, to which I now allude, will still remain Parliamentary boroughs; and we shall still have the pleasure of listening in this House to the Hon. Members who represent them. I will not trouble the House with the names of these boroughs. (Sensation, and cries of "Name!") Their names are on the table, and when I state the principle on which the Government propose to appeal to them to curtail their superfluous representation, every Hon. Member will then have it in his power to ascertain what boroughs they are. (Cries of "Name!") That is not in the Resolutions, and to the Resolutions I mean strictly to confine myself. All boroughs under a population of 7,000 will be asked, in all courtesy, by this House to spare one of their Members. These are in number 23, which, added to the seven forfeited seats, show how the plans of the Government can be carried into effect.

It now becomes my duty to call the attention of the House to other important Resolutions, which, if sanctioned by the House, will materially affect the question of corruption, because they tend to terminate the expenditure on a great scale in county elections. If the House will agree to the three Resolutions which refer to the registration of county voters, to the manner in which the voters shall be polled, and to the mode by which voters at a distance may record their votes, the Government will introduce a series of provisions in their Bill which will, I may say without exaggeration, entirely put an end to the vast expenditure now incurred in county elections. If you combine these three Resolutions with the provisions, such as I have already indicated, of our Bill against corruption, and

with the course which we recommend Parliament to take in reference to those boroughs whose conduct has recently been under the painful scrutiny of the country, I think you will agree that a great blow will be dealt against bribery and corruption in the election of Members to Parliament, which will afford a hope to the country that those evils may possibly in time be entirely suppressed. Therefore, I have great confidence that the House will pass those Resolutions; and I undertake, on the part of the Government, that if they are passed we will bring forward a series of practical proposals which will be easy of adoption and beneficial in operation. The registration of county voters will then be assimilated to the principle on which the registration of borough voters is placed. The polling places will be increased. I will not say that every parish will be a polling place, because there may be some parishes with no voters, but we would have polling places so frequent, and polling districts so limited, that county elections might be carried on so economically that it would be utterly impossible to incur the vast expenditure which even now occurs. If the Resolution with respect to voting papers be adopted by Parliament, we have reason to believe that that system may be acted on with beneficial effects, and thus there will be an end of the immense abuses arising out of bringing up voters from an immense distance at a fabulous cost.

I know not that I have omitted noticing any Resolution before the House except the last, on which it is almost unnecessary for me to make any observation, because I have already on a previous occasion referred to it. I will only say that I have learnt that there exists some misapprehension of the remarks I made with respect to a Commission for settling the boundaries of boroughs. I am told that it was understood from what I said that freeholders in

boroughs should no longer vote for counties. No such idea ever occurred to my mind. There is not in the Bill which I hope to introduce any attempt to disfranchise any voter. We respect the Resolution which the House arrived at on a previous occasion, whatever my private opinion may be, and I always expressed it frankly, to the effect that every man should vote where his qualification is. I am, however, satisfied to submit to the decision of the House, and all I urged on the House was to consider the question of defining the boundaries between boroughs in a just and fair manner. The House will observe that on this head we recommend the issue of a Royal Commission. If these Resolutions pass, and we are authorised to bring in a Bill, it is our intention that the Royal Commission should issue immediately, and at once proceed to act, whereas if the Commission were made a Parliamentary Commission, and if it were bound up with the Bill, the Commission could not act until the passing of the Bill.

I have now fulfilled my task. I told Hon. Members who made inquiries since the time when the Resolutions were laid on the table that I had taken a note of them, and that at the proper time I would explain to the House the application which the Government recommend should be given to the principles expressed in the Resolutions. I trust that the House will candidly consider the observations I have made. It will be our duty on the passing of the Resolutions to introduce a Bill, and I think that its provisions are such as will on the whole satisfy public opinion and the requirements of the case. It will add something like one-third to the constituency, and cause a considerable addition to the number of voters belonging to the working classes. I hope, therefore, it will be fairly considered that they have resumed their ancient position in the Parliamentary scheme

of this country. At any rate, Her Majesty's Government have brought forward, I will not call it an honest Bill, because that epithet has been used so often of late that it might lead to angry recrimination. But they have brought forward a sincere Bill, which they are prepared to carry. Moderate it may be in spirit, but essentially practical, and which I earnestly hope will be backed by the good feeling of an united people.

MINISTERIAL EXPLANATIONS.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS, MARCH 5, 1867.

I WISH to take this opportunity of making some few remarks upon a subject which was treated yesterday, as some thought, too cursorily, but I think only from a misapprehension. I believe my noble Friend the Member for Stamford is now present—and I will now make some remarks upon the course which has been taken by the Government. It has been said that I was hardly justified, when I announced yesterday the secession of three of our colleagues, in stating that secession to have taken place in consequence of the majority of the Cabinet having arrived at a decision in favour of our original policy, because no original policy had been intimated to the House. Now, I think that criticism is not accurate, and, because not accurate, not just. On the 25th of last month, in intimating to the House the measures which a united Cabinet were prepared to recommend to Parliament, I most distinctly adverted to other propositions which it had been our wish to bring forward, but which we had

not felt authorized in making. ("Hear, hear," from Mr. Gladstone.) I am glad the right hon. Gentleman opposite admits the accuracy of that observation. I distinctly stated on that occasion that there were other measures which would have enabled us to deal with the Borough Franchise on a more extensive scale, but which we had felt ourselves obliged to relinquish.

Well, Sir, in bringing forward the measure which I introduced on the 25th of February, I hope to satisfy the House that we were not influenced by any thoughtless spirit, and that in the course which we took we were impelled only by those principles which ought to influence public men, under the circumstances in which we were placed. And here I must remark, with reference to some expressions which have come to my notice—though they were used in another place—that there is no foundation for the charge which has been made against the present Government, that they neglected for a long period the consideration of the important subject which now so much engages the attention of Parliament, and that it has been taken up by us without sufficient thought, with indifference, and after a delay, characterized, probably, by negligence.

Now, Sir, there is no foundation for that charge. Early in the autumn Lord Derby wrote to me and told me that after grave deliberation he had arrived at the conclusion that it was absolutely necessary to deal with the question of Parliamentary Reform, and that it must be dealt with in no niggard spirit. That communication was made to me by Lord Derby early in the autumn, and he requested me to give my best attention to the subject. Sir, I do not say that Lord Derby, charged with the responsibility of State affairs, and anxious, if possible, to bring to a happy solution

one of the most difficult problems of modern politics—I do not say that the feeling or even the conduct of Lord Derby, in the interval between the time when he made that communication to me, and the first meeting of the Cabinet, was not modified, as the conduct of every public man must be modified, by the circumstances of the time, by the temper of the nation, by observation of general or particular opinions, by acquaintance with the obstacles which he should have to encounter, and the various combinations which it might be necessary to enter into to obtain the end which he desired. He must, indeed, be constituted differently from other statesmen if his course were not modified, even sometimes arrested, by such circumstances. But this I will say of Lord Derby, that what was his first opinion early in the autumn, is his last opinion, and it is one upon which he is prepared to act. Sir, we had more than the hope, we had the expectation, that we should have been able to propose to the House a measure conceived in the spirit which had influenced Lord Derby when he made that communication to me in the autumn, and sanctioned and supported by all his colleagues. After having entertained, however, an expectation of that character, we were unhappily, and must say, unexpectedly, disappointed in that hope.

Sir, I impugn no man's conduct under these circumstances. I am confident, for my own part, that every member of the Cabinet of Lord Derby, whatever his opinion on the subject, or whatever the course he may have taken, acted only in duty and in honour. That, however, being the case, called upon somewhat unexpectedly to arrive at a decision, and feeling that he had entered into an engagement with his

Sovereign and with his country to bring this question, if possible, to a solution, Lord Derby sanctioned the measure which on the 25th of last month I brought before the House. Upon that measure I shall make one remark. The House must not think, because we were unable to carry into effect the more considerable measure which we had planned, that we had recourse to a scheme which we had only suddenly adopted.

The measure I proposed on the 25th of February was one which had engaged our attention, and especially the attention—the mature attention—of Lord Derby. We had always been of opinion that if, unfortunately, we should not be justified in introducing the measure which we wished, that was the one which ought to be brought forward, because it could be defended upon principle. I speak of it with impartiality, because it is not and need not now be concealed that it was not the one which I myself should have preferred, but it is one in my opinion which I could consistently and honourably recommend to the House, because it is founded upon a principle, and between that measure and the policy which Lord Derby would have preferred there is in our belief no other course possible.

The principle upon which the measure which I described on the 25th of February is founded is this—it seeks to restore, and would restore, the labouring classes to that place in our Parliamentary system which they forfeited by the Act of 1832. If, for example, it had been carried, the constituency of England would have consisted probably, allowing for double votes, of 1,400,000 persons, and the labouring classes would have possessed of that constituency exactly one quarter. Then, take the great landed proprietors and the various classes in connexion with them, and give

another quarter to them, and the moiety of the constituency between those two sections would have been left to the various sections of the middle class. That, therefore, was a policy which was founded on a principle, for it would have offered to the country a constituency which bore in its various classes a due and harmonious relation to each other, and which, adapted no doubt to different places and to different circumstances, would have placed the working class in the position from which they were expelled in 1832. That was a measure, moreover, which we had reason to believe might have been accepted by Parliament. It was brought forward by a united Cabinet, and we entertained an expectation that there were many influential gentlemen opposite who would have accepted it.

But what was the fact? I must say this, though individually I was not surprised at the result, that it did not give satisfaction to the great Conservative party of the country. I am not speaking merely of those influential gentlemen who have the honour of representing the Conservative party in this House, though I have reason to believe that they entirely represent the feeling of the country in this respect; but I may say this, that not a day elapsed after the measure was brought under the consideration of the House without persons of the highest authority in the country, men of the greatest stake and standing who are distinguished by what are called Conservative opinions, expressing their regret that this measure had been adopted, and that the course which Lord Derby was supposed to uphold—and which, indeed, he had, without circumlocution, taken the opportunity of intimating to his followers his wish to support, had not been pursued. Sir, there was a general feeling throughout the country,

or at least, through the most important Members and communities connected with the Conservative party, that the question of the introduction of the working classes into our Parliamentary system should not be dealt with in a contracted spirit.

Then, Sir, how did that proposition fare with Gentlemen opposite, on whose support in some degree we had hoped we might have counted? Why, the very next day, the right hon. Gentleman, the Member for Lancashire, called his friends together—very properly, for I do not condemn his conduct, or the decision at which they arrived—and after consultation they came to the conclusion that the proposition was unsatisfactory, and that no settlement could be satisfactory unless it were based on a £5 rating. *(Cries of "No, no," from the Opposition.)* That, at all events, was the information which reached us. Probably it was not accurate, and much of the information that reaches you about us is equally unauthentic. I think, however, it will not be disputed that our proposal was not popular with the Liberal party, and that, in fact, some counter-proposition was to be made. It seemed to us, therefore, that we were fast sinking into that unsatisfactory state which distinguished last Session, when one proposition was met by another not materially differing from it, and that the attempt to bring this great question to a solution would have been fruitless in the present as it had been in preceding Sessions. But, Sir, we are conscious that there is some difference between this and the preceding Session, and we did believe and hold that if the question were not seriously and earnestly and vigorously grappled with it would not be for the honour of Parliament or the advantage of the country.

Well, Sir, under these circumstances, Lord Derby called his colleagues together, and wished them to reconsider the

course which had been pursued, and the course which he had formerly and originally wished to pursue. And he expressed his strong opinion that the course which he originally wished to pursue was the only one that would lead to a solution which would be satisfactory to the country and enable Parliament to agree to a measure, and would, on the whole, be most conducive to the interests of the country, present and future. I regret to say that under these circumstances, although a majority of the Cabinet supported Lord Derby, we had the great misfortune of losing three of our colleagues.

Sir, I know there may be some in this House who think that the circumstance of losing colleagues, although it may be a disagreeable incident, is one which, like many of the casualties of life, must be encountered and endured. Some, indeed, think that the breaking up of a Cabinet is like the breaking up of a social meeting, and that these things are easily forgotten and passed over. But I see some right hon. Gentlemen opposite who have had the misfortune of parting with colleagues, and I think they will agree with me that the disruption of that tie—that separation from men with whom you have long been bound by a tie of the most intense interest—that of attempting to manage the affairs of a great country in the hope that you may be contributing to the public welfare—is one of the most painful and saddest incidents that can occur. I rank it among the calamities of life. If my resignation of office could have prevented that unfortunate result, that resignation was at the command of my noble Friend. It was at his command then, as it has always been. And whether I have sat on that side of the House or on this, those who know me know that I have always said that no personal sacrifice on my part should I hesitate to make to maintain a united party or a united

Cabinet. But the state of affairs would not have been bettered by my retiring from office. We lost colleagues with whom it was a pride and pleasure to act; and my own consolation under the circumstances is, that I feel certain the services of such men, whatever may become of myself, will not be lost to their country. And there is one among them whose commanding talents, whose clear intelligence, capacity for labour, and power of expression will always, I am sure, qualify him for taking a leading part in the affairs of this country.

But, Sir, it is unnecessary, as I am sure it must be painful, to touch upon these personal questions. The spirit of honour and the sense of duty will maintain us, I hope, in the trial which we are now undergoing. Lord Derby had he quitted office would only have increased the embarrassment which public men now feel. He retains office with the most earnest determination to carry into effect the policy which he approves. I hope, that without entering into any unnecessary details, which might afford amusement to the curious, but which feeling this House has at all times repudiated, it will be thought that I have fairly placed before the House the position in which the Cabinet is placed. It is our business now to bring forward as soon as we possibly can, the measure of Parliamentary Reform, which after such difficulties and such sacrifices, it will be my duty to introduce to the House. Sir, the House need not fear that there will be any evasion, any equivocation, any vacillation, or any hesitation in that measure. That measure will be brought forward as the definitive opinion of the Cabinet, and by that definitive opinion they will stand. The right hon. Gentleman last night uttered some prophetic deprecations of the character of that measure, which I thought somewhat gratuitous. The right hon. Gentleman seemed to be pain-

fully afraid that its character might be complex. I know well the singular plainness of mind of the right hon. Gentleman, and how he shrinks at all times from anything that is intricate. I do not think that the measure which I am about to bring in will perplex Parliament; but of this I feel quite sure, that it will be perfectly intelligible to the country.

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS, MARCH 18, 1867.

I RISE to ask leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the law for regulating the representation of the people in Parliament. Sir, the principles of political representation, and especially as applied to the circumstances of this country, have of late years been so profoundly and so extensively discussed and investigated, that it is scarcely necessary on this occasion that I should advert to them. I propose, therefore, to confine my observations to two points. I will endeavour, in the first place, clearly to convey to the House the object of the Government in the Bill which I am asking leave to introduce; and, secondly, I will detail the means by which that purpose, in their opinion, can be accomplished. It will be for the House, first, to decide whether that object is desirable; and secondly, if desirable, whether the means which we propose are adequate.

In the first place I would say that our object is not only to maintain, but to strengthen, the character and functions

of this House. They are peculiar in any popular assembly; not only rare, but perhaps unexampled in any other which has existed. The House of Commons has combined national representation with the attributes of a Senate. That peculiar union has, in our opinion, been owing to the variety of elements of which it is formed. Its variety of character has given to it its deliberative power, and it owes to its deliberative power its general authority. We wish, I repeat, not only to maintain, but to strengthen that character and those functions; and we believe that, in the present age and under the existing circumstances of the country, the best way to do so is to establish them on a broad popular basis. I know that there are some persons in whose minds the epithet which I have just used may create a feeling of distrust, but I attribute the sentiment of alarm which is associated with it to a misapprehension of its meaning, and to that perplexity of ideas which too often confounds popular privileges with democratic rights. They are not identical. They are not similar; more than that, they are contrary. Popular privileges are consistent with a state of society in which there is great inequality of condition. Democratic rights, on the contrary, demand that there should be equality of condition as the fundamental basis of the society which they regulate.

Now, that is, I think, a distinction which ought to be borne in mind by the House in dealing with the provisions of the Bill which I am about to ask leave to introduce. If this Bill be a proposal that Her Majesty shall be enabled to concede to her subjects, with the advice and concurrence of her Parliament, a liberal measure of popular privileges, then there may be many of its provisions which will be regarded as prudent, wise, and essentially constitutional. If,

on the other hand, it be looked upon as a measure having for its object to confer democratic rights, then I admit much that it may contain may be viewed in the light of being indefensible and unjust. We do not, however, live, and I trust it will never be the fate of this country to live, under a democracy. The propositions which I am going to make to-night certainly have no tendency in that direction.

Generally speaking, I would say that looking to what has occurred since the Reform Act of 1832 was passed, to the increase of population, the progress of industry, the spread of knowledge, and our ingenuity in the arts,—we are of opinion that numbers, thoughts, and feelings have since that time been created which it is desirable should be admitted within the circle of the Constitution. We wish that admission to take place in the spirit of our existing institutions, and with abated due deference to the traditions of an ancient State.

In dealing with the question of the distribution of power in such a State—which is really the question before us, I would in the first place call the attention of the House to that part of it which is perhaps the most important, and which certainly, to the greatest extent commands the interest of the public. I allude to the franchise, and especially that which should prevail in towns. I would ask the House at the outset to consider the principles upon which the occupation franchise in boroughs ought to rest, and upon which it is expedient to base it. In 1832 the Borough Franchise was founded on the principle of value. Those who paid £10 for the house in which they lived, subject to certain regulations as regards rates and residence, had the borough franchise conferred upon them. I believe that franchise may be fairly considered as having been an efficient and satisfactory franchise, and as having in its generation operated with ad-

vantage to the country. My own opinion from the commencement has always been that seed was sown in that arrangement which would necessarily in the course of time lead to some disturbance. That is, however, a question of controversy, and I will not indulge in controversy at the present moment. It is, nevertheless, a historic fact that only twenty years after the passing of the great measure of 1832 the principal, or, at least, one of the principal authors of that measure announced in this House that the arrangement which had been entered into, especially with respect to the Borough Franchise, was no longer satisfactory, and invited us to consider a new arrangement which might command a more complete assent. That is a fact which cannot be denied.

The proposition which was made at the period to which I refer in order to allay discontent and meet the requirements of the time by the statesman who, upon the whole, had taken nearly the most prominent part in the passing of the Act of 1832 involved a diminution of the value on which the Borough Franchise was established. That proposition was received with no satisfaction, and from that period up to the present—and fifteen years have, I think, since elapsed—the question has more or less engaged public attention, and has been taken up by public men who have brought forward various schemes with a view to the solution of the difficulties by which it is surrounded. All these schemes have in their turn proved to be unsatisfactory, and all have been unsuccessful; but every one of them has been distinguished by this characteristic, that the only remedy proposed was a diminution in some form or another, or in some degree or another, of the value on which the Borough Franchise was based in 1832.

The House will easily recall to its recollection the com-

bination of figures which have been submitted to the notice of Parliament on this subject. We had before us £8 and £7 rating or rental; £6 in every form, and we now hear of other figures. No proposition, however, which has as yet been put forward has given satisfaction, because the country, and the House reflecting the feeling of the country, has felt that by none of the changes suggested was a settlement of the question likely to be insured. Last year a Bill was introduced with the same object as that which I have risen to ask for leave to bring in to-night—namely, to amend the law for the representation of the people in Parliament. That Bill was avowedly not founded on a principle; it was avowedly founded, as far as I can understand, on expediency. The right hon. Gentleman who was its powerful advocate in this House seemed to me always distinctly to have laid it down, in the course of his argument on the subject, that it was necessary there should be an admission of the working classes into the constituencies; that in accordance with a figure which he had fixed upon, he calculated that a certain portion of them would be admitted, but that if another figure were adopted which he named, he thought the number admitted would be excessive, and he therefore recommended the first figure as that which, upon the whole, would, he thought, furnish the best and safest solution of the difficulty. His proposal, therefore, involved no principle. It might have been an appropriate arrangement, but it was essentially an expedient.

The House knows what took place during the long discussions in which we were engaged last year. (Ironical cheers from the Opposition.) I infer from that cheer that the House is prepared to recognize the truth of the statement that it was generally felt that the proposal of the late Government afforded no prospect of a satisfactory settle-

ment of this question. A very considerable amount of time was last Session employed in a very unsatisfactory manner until at length the House took the matter into its own hands, and in one of the largest divisions which ever took place within these walls asserted a principle with regard to the Borough Franchise which was carried by a majority. That principle was that the Borough Franchise should be founded on rating.

The House will admit that the statement I have made is fair and accurate. No one questions for a moment that the Government fully realised the importance of that decision. Of course, if they had not acknowledged its importance they would not have retired from a position of power; but they felt that the decision at which the House of Commons had arrived was one opposed to the whole policy which they had pursued during the Session. I do not say that every Gentleman on both sides of the House who contributed to that division—I do not say that every one in a division which numbered above 600 Members had narrowly investigated and pursued to the last consequences all that must follow from the assertion and adoption of that principle; but it happened, as happens in all popular assemblies, that a great decision was arrived at by the unerring instinct of the House. The House felt that for the last fifteen years this question of the Borough Franchise had not been treated in a satisfactory manner by any Government which had attempted to deal with it, and that the time had come when some principle should be laid down in a distinct and decided manner for the guidance of those who might have to offer propositions to the House on the subject.

I take it for granted that if ever there was a decision of the House of Commons which meant something it was that

decision which determined the fate of the Ministry; and if anything ever had the character of authority in this House at all, it was the vote arrived at on that occasion. The House, I assume, meant by the decision it arrived at that the person who was to be intrusted with a vote to elect Members of Parliament should be one with respect to whom there should be some guarantee and security for the regularity of his life and the general trustworthiness of his conduct; and the House thought that the fact of a man being rated to the relief of the poor and being able to pay his rates gave that fair assurance which the State had a right to require. I take it that vote of the House of Commons meant this:—If you are going to invest men with the exercise of public rights, let that great trust be accompanied with the exercise of public duty. I take it for granted that was what the House of Commons meant. It meant that the being rated to the poor and the paying of the rates constituted a fair assurance that the man who fulfilled those conditions was one likely to be characterised by regularity of life and general trustworthiness of conduct. That is a principle which the House thought ought not to be lost sight of, but should be a *sine quâ non* in the settlement of the Borough Franchise.

In having to consider this question, we accepted as a guide that decision of the House of Commons, placing on it what we deemed to be its real interpretation. We believe that the House has resolved and wishes that the borough suffrage should be bound up and united with the duty of paying rates for the maintenance of the poor, and paying them really—that, in fact, a *bonâ fide* rating franchise is what the House of Commons meant by the resolution it adopted. Accepting the decision of the House with that

interpretation, we had to consider how such a proposition could be united with the principle of value, which hitherto was and still is the law of the country with respect to the Borough Franchise, and which without exception during all the discussions on the subject for the last fifteen years has been accepted by Parliament. The result of this attempt was not satisfactory. In accepting a real and genuine principle of rating as a basis, we found the moment we endeavoured to connect it with value disturbing elements, which promised no prospect of solution, and gave no chance of permanency. Therefore, under these circumstances, in the course of consideration we proposed to ourselves to examine the whole question of occupation in boroughs, and see what would be the effect of the application of the principle of genuine rating without reference to value.

Let me call the attention of the House to some figures, which will be in the hands of Members immediately and in greater detail. There are in the boroughs of England and Wales 1,367,000 male householders, of whom there are at present qualified to vote 644,000. There would, therefore, remain unqualified 723,000. In applying the principle of a franchise founded on being rated to the poor, and of personal payment of the rates, we found that out of these 723,000 now disqualified, or rather not qualified, for voting under the existing law, we should at once have had to take away 237,000—that is to say, that beneath the £10 line which now qualifies there are 237,000 persons who are rated to the poor, and who pay rates, and who if the law were so changed that value should not be an element would then be qualified to vote for Members of Parliament. Now, if you add these 237,000 persons who are rated to the poor, and who pay their rates, to the 644,000 who are at present

qualified, you will find that there would be 881,000 persons fulfilling the required conditions—that is to say, almost exactly two-thirds of the whole of the householders in the boroughs of England and Wales. There would still remain 486,000 who would not be qualified under these circumstances, because they do not pay rates personally. A great deduction must be made from those 486,000 on account of persons, who might claim to pay the rates, but a great amount of those 486,000 persons would still remain without the opportunity of being rated to the poor, because there are certain Acts of Parliament, some of a general and some of a local character, by which the landlord compounds for the rates of his tenants, who, in consequence, are called Compound Householders, and most of these are under the operation of the Act with the details of which every gentlemen in the House is familiar—the Small Tenements Act. There are 58 boroughs which are entirely under the operation of that Act, and there are 98 boroughs in which certain parishes only are under the operation of the Act.

In considering the settlement of the franchise for boroughs, and the possibility of attempting to establish it, not on the fluctuating principle of value, which is only a question of degree which may vary, and which we might be called on to change from year to year, it is impossible not to take into view the peculiar position of the Compound Householders. And the question arises, ought a Compound Householder to have a vote? Well, Sir, in our opinion, assuming that the House is of the same opinion, that the foundation of the franchise should be rating and a payment of rates, and that that is adopted by the House, not as a check, as some would say, but, on the contrary, as a qualification, and because it is the best evidence of the trustworthiness of the individual, we have no hesitation in saying ourselves that

we do not think that the Compound Householder, as a Compound Householder, ought to have a vote. But, Sir, we are far from saying that any person who is a Compound Householder, from the effect of Acts which have been passed for the convenience of vestries, should be deprived of the opportunity of obtaining and enjoying this right which persons in the same sphere of life may have granted to them, and which, for aught we know, these Compound Householders may be equally competent to possess and to exercise. And therefore, Sir, we should have to consider whether it might not be possible—in the case of Compound Householders who are deprived of rating for the moment by Acts to which I have referred, either of a general or local character, whether it might not be possible to give them the opportunity of accepting the public duty, and in consequence the public right, which others in the same sphere of life and influenced in their conduct by the same conditions of existence might possess; and, taking this general view of the question, seeing the impossibility of settling it on any principle connected with value, and that it is only by taking the rating principle in its completeness and authenticity that you can get one on which you can rest a perfect settlement, our opinion is, and we shall make that proposition to the House, that we should establish the franchise in the boroughs on this principle, that any man who has occupied a house for two years, and been rated to the relief of the poor and pays his rates—every householder under these conditions should enjoy the Borough Franchise.

By that means the 237,000 persons who are now rated and pay their rates would, of course, be at once qualified. But with regard to the Compound Householders, we propose that every facility shall be given to them—that they shall be allowed to enter their names upon the rate-book, to ful-

fil the constitutional condition to which I have adverted, and then they will, of course, succeed to the constitutional right which is connected with it. Sir, if we pursue that course you have your Borough Franchise fixed upon principle; you know where you are; you know that the power of electing members of Parliament must be exercised by men who, by their position in life, have shown that they are qualified for its exercise. And meeting the difficulty of Compound Householders by the provisions which are in the Bill, and which will give them every facility to claim the exercise of the same right on condition of fulfilling the same duty, the whole of the 723,000 householders in the boroughs of England that are at present not qualified to vote for Members of Parliament will be qualified by the Bill I am asking leave to introduce. Nor will there be a man among them, who, if he deserves the franchise, may not possess it.

Now, Sir, I have heard many observations made on this question of the Compound Householders; but the arguments, though plausible, amount only to this—those who wish that Compound Householders should not qualify themselves for a vote upon the constitutional condition which we propose as the means by which the right should be obtained really, in fact, make one assumption on which all their remarks are founded, and that is this, that the working classes of this country are really so little interested in the possession and exercise of the suffrage that they will not take the slightest trouble in order to avail themselves of it, and possess it.

Well, that may be the opinion of those who make such observations, but it is not the opinion of Her Majesty's Ministers. We believe that the feeling of the great body of the people on this subject is very different—that it is a

feeling very likely to increase in this country, and that the conditions which we have laid down as those which should qualify a householder in a borough for a vote are consistent with the security of society, and are at the same time conditions which would be agreeable to the mind of every industrious man of integrity. Now, Sir, I may recapitulate to the House for a moment the figures we have to deal with, because such vague assertions are made in the absence of correct statistics of voting and of householders that it is well that the House should bear them in mind. There are, as I have said, 1,367,000 male householders in the boroughs of England, and at the present moment 644,000 of them are qualified.

MR. BRIGHT.—May I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether these houses include warehouses and shops?

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.—They are houses —dwelling-houses. I am referring to the male occupiers of dwelling-houses. Of the remaining 723,000, if the House accedes to the Bill I have to introduce, 237,000 now rated to the relief of the poor and paying their rates would immediately be qualified to vote; and in the case of the 486,000 who are Compound Householders, facilities would be afforded to them, if they chose, of claiming their vote,—that is to say, of inserting their names in the rate-book, and paying their rates, and then they also, as a matter of course, will succeed to the enjoyment of the right. Well, Sir, that appears to me to be the only solid foundation upon which you can settle this question of the Borough Franchise. I have heard nothing which gives me any hope that any other plan can be offered which involves at the same time the principle that society has a right to ask that the person who exercises the suffrage is not a migratory pauper; and as regards settlement, I can see no satisfactory settlement unless

you lay down the principle that every householder who fulfils the constitutional conditions to which I have adverted proves himself one qualified for the possession and exercise of such a trust; unless you take that settlement I can see no chance of this question being ever settled.

Now, Sir, there is a plan which I am told at this moment is popular among certain persons. Indeed, there are a great many plans, both as regards the Suffrage, Distribution of Seats, and other matters, which I have no doubt will come before the consideration of the House, and when they do it will be very much for the advantage of those who introduce them to our notice, for I believe these subjects never can be better understood than after a discussion in the House of Commons. But there is a plan, I am told, popular with some persons, and which is held forth as a more satisfactory settlement of this question than the one I have proposed on the part of the Government, and that is what is called the £5 rating—that the suffrage should be established on a £5 rating. Now, Sir, I must say, having had very much to consider these questions, I know of no Serbonian bog deeper than a £5 rating would prove to be. Just let the House see how it stands. In the present state of the law, as I shall show to the House, if the interpretation we have placed on the great vote of last year be a sound one, and if it be not a sound one it proves the House of Commons was trifling with the question—there really is no such thing as a £5 rating—you let in a very large and very indiscriminate number to the enjoyment of the right without the preliminary performance of duties, and when they are let in you leave a great many behind them, who, because others are let in, immediately cry out to be admitted. Then where is your settlement? There is no more reason

why a £5 rating should give a qualification than one of £4. But then I am told that this great difficulty is to be entirely overcome by a violent change to be effected in the law of England. Nominal £5 raters are to be turned into *bonâ fide* £5 raters by the operation of the law, and no Englishman who pays less than that sum is to enjoy the privilege of voting. All below that line are, in fact, to be taken out of the sphere of self-government, and deprived of the opportunity which the humblest now possess, and would possess under the plan we propose, of performing public duties, and consequently of obtaining public rights.

I can imagine no scheme more injurious—I may say more fatal—than a proposition of this kind; and it seems to me that if we were to adopt it manhood suffrage would be the logical and necessary consequence, and that every man who finds that he is in a position in which he may not be permitted to fulfil a constitutional condition which may give him a constitutional right would naturally fall back into the arms of the lowest agitators, and feel that his only chance of ever obtaining the rights of constitutional citizenship would be by a process which has not hitherto been recognized by any authorities in this country.

I have now expressed to the House, as far as the occupation in boroughs is concerned, upon what principle we recommend the Borough Franchise to be founded. It would make at once 237,000 persons qualified for the suffrage, and would allow all who were not rated before to avail themselves of the right, and so, if they chose, to become electors. But it is said, and it has been said by a very high authority —one for whom I have a great personal regard and respect, although, considering what a high authority he is, I think he sometimes makes, especially with regard to his op-

ponents, very reckless remarks—that the plan of the Government, with which that high authority, at the time he said it, was really unacquainted, and for which he might have waited, was an assault upon the rights and power of the middle classes. It is certainly not the intention of Her Majesty's Government to introduce a measure which shall make such an assault. Her Majesty's Government are anxious that, on the one hand, the aristocracy, and on the other hand the working classes, shall have their due share in the Parliamentary constitution of the country; but they recognize with sincerity the extreme expediency of the principle that the influence of the middle classes of the country should not be diminished. The Government look to the steady virtues of those classes to exercise a right bias on the constitution of the country, and they believe that the authority which those classes obtained in a great degree under the Act of 1832 has been exercised wisely, worthily, and to the advantage of the country at large. But if there be, by the proposition which I have to make, any chance such as has been intimated by this great authority, why, I think that we meet it by a proposition to institute a franchise founded on a most popular principle, and one of which the middle classes must largely partake—that is, the franchise founded on the payment of direct taxation. We propose that every person in England who pays 20s. a year direct taxation shall possess a vote.

MR. GLADSTONE.—Whether he be a Compound Householder or not?

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.—Everybody who pays 20s. annually in direct taxation shall have a vote. Thus we build up the constituency which would establish the franchise in the boroughs upon two great principles—the payment of direct taxation and the payment of rates.

But it has been urged that the enjoyment of this franchise, founded upon the payment of direct taxes, is one which would not be enjoyed as intended in a great degree by the class whose influence, it is said, our proposition may assail; that is to say, that most of them are householders, and therefore they would not enjoy this franchise. Therefore, we meet that objection by proposing that a person who pays 20s. direct taxation, and who enjoys the franchise which depends upon the payment of direct taxation, if he is also a householder, and pays his rates, may exercise his suffrage in respect of both qualifications.

Mr. GLADSTONE.—I wish to ask a question very material to the complete understanding of this subject, and that is, whether a Compound Householder not paying his own rates, but paying direct taxes to the requisite amount, will have a vote in the respect of the payment of direct taxation.

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER.—He would, of course, have a vote in respect of the franchise which he enjoys as a payer of direct taxation, and if he chose to pay his rates in addition then he would have two votes. Now, Sir, before I give to the House a general summary of the result of these franchises upon the borough constituency, there are yet some other franchises with which the House is familiar, but which I again wish to recommend to its consideration.

Mr. ROEBUCK.—Will the right hon. Gentleman explain what he means by direct taxation?

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER.—I mean the payment of income-tax and assessed taxes. But I wish to observe that it would not include the qualification which was so humorously referred to by an hon. Gentleman the other night, because it will not include anything which is paid under licences of any description.

There are other franchises which we also propose. The House is already acquainted with them, and although they are not of vast importance, still I think they are founded upon right principles, and I hope the House will candidly consider them. The vote which we wish to found upon the possession of £50 property in the funds or of £50 in savings-banks constitutes property qualifications of this character; that is to say, we will give to small holders of personal property the same privileges which the small holders of real property have, and, as a man possessed of a 40s. freehold has a vote, we think that the person who has an equivalent property of a personal character should also have a vote. We think that by this means a vote would be intrusted to a body of persons belonging chiefly to the working classes, who would exercise the privilege to the advantage of the country.'

Then there is the educational franchise. It has been said that if you introduce a suffrage founded upon the payment of direct taxation that it would supply means for exercising the vote to those persons who otherwise would have it under the educational franchise. To a certain degree there is truth in that; but having taken some pains to investigate what would be the operation of such a franchise, I am bound to say that there are many persons in whose condition the House would be deeply interested, some of whom would not have any opportunity, either as householders—and this would be peculiarly the case in counties—or as payers of direct taxation, of exercising the suffrage, but who are peculiarly qualified to exercise such a trust. Among others the position of ministers of religion is very remarkable. I am speaking of ministers of all sects. I find men who entirely devote their lives to solace or to elevate the sense of existence are men who under this franchise would exercise, and I

think admirably exercise, a certain degree of political influence, but who, either as householders or as payers of income-tax especially to the amount of 20s., would certainly be debarred from the franchise. I therefore trust that the House will allow these three franchises to pass.

'I do not think that it is our business to act the part of electioneering agents, and to make estimates, always of a most speculative character, of the number of persons who will vote under the plan we propose. That is not our business as Ministers in Parliament. We are to see who, under the laws of this country, are to have the opportunity of acquiring a vote. And allow me to remind the House of the nature of the arguments which are always used by those who are the promoters of increased suffrage. They are always founded upon the number of the population. But the business of the House of Commons in proposing or in passing laws upon this subject is to ascertain as far as possible the number who will be admitted under the particular measure. They are not to estimate a thing which, after all, can only be done in a speculative manner—the number who may be tempted, in consequence of the passing of the Bill, to register their suffrages. Their business is simply to pass those laws which they think will conduce to the welfare or safety of the country. Well, I say that if this Bill be carried there is not a man, whether he be a rate-payer paying a rental of less than £10, or a Compound Householder, who may not qualify himself if he choose. In the new boroughs to which I will afterwards advert the estimated number of voters will be 68,000. The number of direct taxpayers who would probably vote in boroughs will be very considerable. The public departments have no means of offering to the House any recent information upon this subject, and it would probably take months to obtain any. Making due

allowance, however, for the increased property and assessed taxes—probably at the rate of 23 per cent.—since Mr. Macaulay's returns were made to the House, I should think that the number who would qualify in boroughs would greatly exceed 200,000. [Mr. Gladstone.—"From direct taxes?"] Yes, from direct taxes. The educational franchise would in the boroughs give 35,000 voters, the fundholders' franchise 25,000, and the savings-bank franchise 45,000.

You would thus have more than a million of voters who could qualify themselves in the boroughs for the exercise of the franchise. It has been said that they will not choose to avail themselves of that great right. I regret to hear that opinion, but I venture to doubt its correctness. But still, whatever may be our opinion, it is the duty of the House so to deal with this question that those whom they believe to be qualified for the exercise of this privilege shall have that opportunity, and the duty of Parliament ceases when that has been accomplished.

I will now proceed to consider the question of the County Franchise. We propose that these new suffrages shall be extended to the counties; but in consequence of the great difference which prevails between counties and boroughs we do not propose, under any circumstances, that any person should exercise the privilege of voting twice. I now come to the consideration of the amount of the occupation in counties. When I last made some observations to the House upon this subject, I stated that Her Majesty's Government thought, on the whole, that the county qualification had better be placed at £20 rating. When I made that statement I made it with a feeling on the part of the Government that the opinion of the House of Commons

ought to be consulted upon the subject, and because, also, they believed that the House had never had the opportunity of arriving at any decided opinion upon the matter. The question was really never put fairly before the House. When the hon. Member for Surrey and others came forward with propositions to reduce the occupation for counties to £10, the House was always asked to consider those propositions in an isolated manner. Now, we thought, and I believe that the House has been long of the same opinion, that this question ought to be considered in conjunction with those of analogous character, and ought not to be treated in an isolated manner. They depend upon each other, and I look upon all those attempts to reduce the County Franchise as barren of results, and as a proof of the correctness of that opinion, I may remark that they have been barren of consequences. No one ever felt that a satisfactory settlement would be likely to result from those debates.

Last year there was an opportunity when the Reform Bill was before the House—when the mind of the House was accustomed to consider in all its details and in all its ramifications the principles of Parliamentary representation—there was, I say, at that time a fair opportunity for discussing this question in a satisfactory manner, and for arriving at a satisfactory settlement. But this subject, always unfortunate, was never more unfortunate than on that occasion, because a great party scene and division took place at the beginning of the evening destined for its discussion. It was brought on in a languid House—in a very thin House. It was decided, I grant, in a very full House, but it was discussed in an unsatisfactory and feeble manner. My opinion is a perfectly impartial one, for I myself took part

in the debate. The division was taken in a full House, and the majority was not only a very slight one, but the question was decided upon a principle which the result of the Session showed was not the conviction of the House of Commons. Well, if the House of Commons meant anything it meant that rating should be the principle of the franchise, and I believe that decision has been received by the country as one of the soundest at which the House of Commons ever arrived.

Well, Sir, we should have been glad if the question had been calmly and completely discussed, and, at whatever opinion the House of Commons had arrived, we should have accepted that opinion as a wise and a sound one. In endeavouring, however, to bring forward a complete measure, and as far as we can to offer a definite and definitive position to the consideration of the House, Her Majesty's Government gave much attention to this question of the county occupation franchise; and, on the whole, they believe that the qualification that would be most advantageous and most satisfactory would be a £15 rating, and that is the amount at which they are determined to fix it. That would qualify 171,000 additional householders for the exercise of the franchise. The savings-bank franchise will give 40,000; the fundholders franchise 25,000; and the educational franchise 44,000 voters. A very large number, exceeding 150,000, will vote in virtue of the payment of direct taxes. No doubt many of these would possess double qualifications, but there will still be an addition to the county franchise of upwards of 300,000 voters.

I have now occupied the attention of the House with a subject which I am afraid is at no time entertaining, and which, when the conclusions have been to some extent forc-

gone, must possess less attraction than ever; but I have placed before the House, I hope with some clearness, the proposal of the Government. There is another part of the subject of very great interest, on which, although to-day I am anxious to touch upon nothing but what is necessary, it is requisite that I should make some observations, and that is the Distribution of Seats. Now, Sir, that is a question that very greatly interests the public mind, and I know there are members on both sides of the House who take a very deep interest in it. The proposition which I made upon a previous occasion has been described as quite inadequate to the occasion and to the circumstances in which the country is placed; and we have heard that it is an insufficient response to the demands of the public voice. I am perfectly ready to meet those objections, though I have no desire upon an occasion such as this to invite controversy, for I have no doubt there will be opportunities hereafter for entering upon matters of detail. It is said that there should be a much larger scheme of disfranchisement; that at the very least every town of 10,000 inhabitants or less should lose a member, and some say we should even go further than that. We are also told that a third member should be given to many places, and thus, by a process of disfranchisement and cumulative votes, at last a perfect representation of the people would be accomplished. We have given that subject the great consideration which it deserves. My own opinion is that the votaries of this new system are not very numerous in the country, and I doubt whether they are very numerous in this House; but its advocates are no doubt in many cases men of distinguished ability and high character, and persons whose opinions upon any public subject will command and deserve attention.

But whatever may be the number of those persons who advocate three-cornered constituencies and cumulative voting, there is no doubt that a very great noise has been made by them. I am willing to admit that, as far as the articles and the letters in the newspapers are concerned, the question is settled; but I have always observed that those articles and letters—I do not wish to speak slightingly of them, for I have written leading articles for newspapers myself—have one distinguishing characteristic, and that is that they always assume there is only one side of a question; but their writers are wise in their generation, because if they did not act on that assumption nobody at the moment would read their productions. As, then, the question of three-cornered constituencies and cumulative votes has been brought before the consideration of the House, I, and others who are near me, will meet the question frankly and fully. The House will not, I am sure, permit the introduction of any controversial matter upon the present occasion, but it has a right to hear the opinions of the Government upon a question, and therefore I say that, having considered the matter without prejudice, I am sure, and, having completely and thoroughly tested it at every point and tried it in every quarter, our opinion is that the scheme is erroneous in equity, and would be so in practice.

Sir, there are only two courses to follow if you wish to improve the representation of the people by a Redistribution of Seats; there is no middle course. You must either create a new electoral map of England, or you must deal practically with the circumstances before you, and follow the line to which I at this moment refer, and which I think the Government has followed. With regard to the proposition that there should be a complete revision of the

representative system of the country as far as electoral localities are concerned, if I may presume to give advice to the House of Commons, I would say do not make that a question to be settled by a Parliamentary majority, or accepted on the authority of any Ministry whatever. It is a subject too vast and too deep for us to treat of and deal with without preliminary investigation conducted by persons of the highest standing, and character, and experience, and learning in the country. When in possession of the result of their accumulated knowledge and of their mature thought and great experience, a popular assembly might weigh their opinions, and a practical Ministry might embody their resolutions. There is no other means by which you can deal with this proposition; but if you are not of opinion that the electoral map of England should be reconstructed, then you must proceed prudently and practically; you must inquire what unrepresented places ought, fairly speaking, to be represented, and you ought not to lose the opportunity then offered of giving the teeming multitudes of the counties as far as you can that direct representation which they want, and which indirectly I admit they possess. These are the two practical points which you ought to have before you. There is no medium between dealing with the whole question in a vast and solemn manner, by means adequate for the settlement of so great a matter, and the prudent, practical method which I mentioned.

Well, Sir, we are not prepared to take the first course, although I do not say it is unworthy of deep and respectful consideration; we therefore propose to follow the second, and we have found towns in this country which we think ought to be represented, and whose representatives would

bring fresh vigour to this House. The population of the counties, invigorated and vivified with the new franchises which you are giving it, will demand direct representation in this House, and you ought to move in that direction as far as you can, so that counties may no longer be said to be represented only indirectly by small boroughs. I am of opinion that this may be done without any very serious disturbance of your representative system. Whatever you do, your representation must be fairly distributed over the country; if you give a greater preponderance to one part at the expense of another you create two nations; there will be a want of sympathy and cordiality between the parts, and you will, in fact, be going back to the principles of the Heptarchy.

Although I have read the names of the places we propose to enfranchise before, with one exception, I think it becoming to repeat them with the addition of the place that before was wanting. We propose, then, by the thirty seats that will be obtained by the process of disfranchisement to give a representative to Hartlepool, Darlington, Burnley, Staleybridge, St. Helen's, Dewsbury, Barnsley, Middlesborough, Wednesbury, Croydon, Gravesend, and Torquay, and two to the Tower Hamlets. In respect to the counties, we propose to divide North Lancashire, North Lincolnshire, West Kent, East Surrey, Middlesex, South Staffordshire, and South Devon, and give them two Members each, and, dividing South Lancashire, also, we propose to give it an additional Member. We also propose to give a seat to the London University.

I have placed before the House the principal features of the Bill which I am asking to introduce. The Bill itself will be in the hands of hon. Members to-morrow, and then they will be perfectly well qualified to form an opinion upon the

manner in which the principles I have laid down are acted on. I hope that the House will candidly consider this measure. As far as we are concerned, we have spared no pains, no thought, and have not shrunk from what was more important, perhaps, in endeavouring to bring it before the House. I will not advert unnecessarily to the circumstances attending the framing of this measure which has now been brought before the House of Commons, under very great difficulties and at very great sacrifices. I do not wish to disguise that I have felt great chagrin and great mortification in connexion with what has taken place; but I believe I have done my duty, and under the circumstances I do not think I could have done other than I have. In attempting to bring the question to this point we have lost those whose absence from our councils we more than regret; we have had to appeal to a high-spirited party to make what no doubt to some was to a certain extent a sacrifice of principle, much sacrifice of sentiment, and much sacrifice of interest. But we have not appealed in vain, because the members of that party were animated by the same feeling which influenced us—a sense of duty and conviction; they felt that the time had arrived when this question must be dealt with and settled extensively and completely.

I hope, therefore, the House of Commons will give this measure a fair and candid consideration. We believe it is one which, if adopted in spirit, will settle its long differences; and that it is qualified to meet the requirements of the country. I am told for certain there are objections against it, but I beg to remind the House of the distinctions which we draw between popular privileges and democratic rights. I am told that in this measure there are checks and counterpoises, and that it assumes in this country the existence of classes. If there are checks and counterpoises in our scheme, we live

under a Constitution of which we boast that it is a Constitution of checks and counterpoises. If the measure bears some reference to existing classes in this country, why should we conceal from ourselves, or omit from our discussions, the fact that this country is a country of classes, and a country of classes it will ever remain? What we desire to do is to give every one who is worthy of it a fair share in the government of the country by means of the elective franchise; but, at the same time, we have been equally anxious to maintain the character of the House to make propositions in harmony with the circumstances of the country, to prevent a preponderance of any class, and to give a representation to the nation.

THE IRISH CHURCH.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS, APRIL 3, 1868.

SIR, the right hon. Gentleman the Member for South Lancashire has moved that we should go into Committee of the whole House upon the subject of the Irish Church, in order that he may propose resolutions which he has placed upon the table. We have not at present to discuss those resolutions, which would lead us into matters of great detail, of constitutional interest, and of legal difficulty, which might divert us from the general topic which now engages our attention. I apprehend that so far as the right hon. Gentleman is concerned, there is no mistake as to his general meaning; for, although he has not yet had an opportunity of moving his resolutions he has expressed the outline of the policy which he proposes that this House and the country should adopt. I apprehend that I am not in any way misrepresenting his meaning, or misinterpreting his expressions, a thing most foreign from my intention, when I say that the right hon. Gentleman proposes to terminate the connexion between the State and the Church, so far as Ireland is concerned, which in neological phrase is styled disestablishment; and that he proposes a policy, which first partially, and in the end completely, would accomplish the disendowment of the Church in Ireland. I believe I have correctly expressed what the right hon. Gentleman has stated, or rather

intimated, and what if opportunity offered he would in more detail bring under our consideration.

Well, Sir, this question having been brought before the House and the country somewhat suddenly, as all will admit, the Government had to consider what was the proper mode in which to encounter it. They might have moved the "previous question" to the motion for going into Committee. That is a course which upon the same subject was, I believe, adopted by our predecessors three years ago, and it is a course which is much approved by those who have experience of Parliamentary life when they deal with difficult questions. It might have been prudent three years ago to meet this motion by moving the previous question; but I think myself, considering the circumstances under which this question is now brought forward, not by an isolated and independent Member of Parliament, but by a party of considerable power, by the leader of the Opposition in this House, and under circumstances, as it appears to us, of precipitation, and, consequently, being a question which attracts and even alarms the public and the House—it would have been unwise of us to have taken refuge in a course at all times ambiguous and not altogether satisfactory.

Well, Sir, a Motion to consider the condition of the Irish Church, or, strictly speaking, to go into Committee for that purpose, we might have met with a direct negative; but what would have been the inevitable inference which would have been drawn from such a course on our part? It would have been said we were of opinion that no change, no improvement, no modification was necessary, expedient, or desirable in the condition of the Church in Ireland. That was not the conclusion we wished to express. That was not our opinion; and I will meet in due course the demand of the right hon. Gentleman who has just sat down on this

subject that, so far as we are concerned, there shall be a clear and intelligible issue. But if it were our opinion that the condition of the Church in Ireland was susceptible of beneficial changes, how could we, without exposing ourselves to the grossest misrepresentation of our views, have met the Motion with a direct negative? Who can doubt what would have been the inference drawn? In their speeches hon. Gentlemen would have asked, "Is the old reign of bigotry never to cease? Are you resolved to oppose all improvements? Are you prepared to deny that there are any anomalies to be corrected in arrangements which were settled, hastily settled, at a period of great political excitement forty years ago—are you doggedly determined to say that there is no possible room for improvement in the condition of the Irish Church?" We know that would have been the general tenour of the speeches of hon. Gentlemen opposite; and, Sir, not only towards those reproaches, but because we are of opinion that considerable modifications may be made in the temporalities of that Church, highly to the advantage of the Church herself, we could not take the course of meeting a motion of this kind with a direct negative. What was the third means open to us? To move an Amendment. An Amendment has been moved by my noble Friend the Foreign Secretary, which has been the object of much criticism, as has been every Amendment moved since I have sat in this House, but I am prepared to maintain that this Amendment is drawn in strict accordance with Parliamentary experience and precedent. We took that course, acting on the example of the most eminent men that ever controlled the affairs of the House of Commons, and we took it believing that it was the one most advantageous to the public interests.

Now, Sir, when Sir Robert Peel was the leader of the Opposition—of that long opposition, the opposition of seven years—during the seven years' war—when the circumstances of the House were not very different from those which now prevail, when there was, as there has now been for many years in this House, a balanced state of parties, and when every year there was not one but more than one struggle for power between the great parties, on one occasion when, as on the present occasion, a Motion was to be met by an Amendment, the invariable advice of Sir Robert Peel was this:—"If you are obliged to have an Amendment, never attempt to express your policy in an Amendment. If you attempt to express it fully, you will produce a long and cumbrous document, which will open an immense number of issues, and which must bring about very protracted discussions. If, on the other hand, you adopt concinnity of expression and condensation, you will be accused of ambiguity and equivocation. The province of a party is to express and vindicate its policy in debate. Your Amendment should never be inconsistent with your policy, but you must fix on some practical point which if carried would defeat the Motion of your opponent."

Now, Sir, I think that very sound advice, and it has been invariably followed, not only by Sir Robert Peel's friends, but by his distinguished opponents. If you look to all the amendments drawn up upon all great occasions by Sir Robert Peel's party and by Lord Russell's party, you will find that the adoption of that advice has been the invariable rule. Well, with this view, in drawing the Amendment Her Majesty's Ministers fixed on two points—which they thought essentially practical, which if the House accepted them would defeat the motion of the right hon. Gentleman, and which are perfectly consistent with the policy I am

prepared to explain, expound, and uphold. These two points have already been mentioned to the House in the observations which I took the liberty of making when the hon. Member for Cork brought forward his motion on the state of Ireland. I mentioned then that in our opinion so far as the Church in Ireland was concerned it was most expedient that we should await the report of the Royal Commission which has been recently appointed, and which has been extremely industrious, as we have reason to believe, in its labours. That report we believed would be in our possession, I will not say in an early part of the Session, but in the spring of this year.

That was one position I took up. There was another. I denied the moral competence of this House of Commons to enter on a discussion of this question with a view to its settlement. I did not, as the right hon. Gentleman the Member for London (Mr. Göschen) the other night stated —I did not resist the motion on the ground that this was what he called a moribund Parliament. Nothing of the kind. Although this might be the last Session of the present Parliament, and although when an election takes place for a future Parliament the appeal may be made to a larger constituency, I do not for a moment bring forward those circumstances as the basis of the argument that this House was not morally competent to deal with the question. I rested it precisely on another reason, I said that when a fundamental law of the country was called into question, though technically and legally this House had a right to do anything within the sphere of the House of Commons, it was not morally competent to decide such a question if those who had elected it had not, in the constitutional course of public life, received some intimation that such a question was to come before it. That is what I said. It is very different from the misrepre-

sentation—unintentional of course—of the Member for the City of London.

Well, now I ask, had the country the slightest intimation during the last few years—previous to or during the period of the political existence of this House has it had the slightest intimation that this important, this all-important question, not only from its specific nature, but also from the ulterior consequences which it may induce, would be brought under discussion in Parliament? I appeal to the programme of the Prime Minister of the time, which recommended a dissolution of Parliament and explained his policy to the country. There is not the slightest allusion to the state of the Irish Church in that program. We know very well from the correspondence which has taken place between a prelate of the Irish Church, himself a man of eminent abilities and accomplishments—and the right hon. Gentleman—although the letter appeared to take the right hon. Gentleman by surprise the other night—we know that the right hon. Gentleman at the time of the dissolution had not the remotest idea that the Irish Church would become the great subject of discussion. Sir, it is impossible to suppose that the right hon. Gentleman is not sincere in anything which he writes at the moment he writes it, and I have not the slightest doubt that that was as honest a letter as even the right hon. Gentleman ever wrote. I do not throw the slightest suspicion on that letter. But after all, what was the character of it? Is it not a record of the fact that only three years ago the right hon. Gentleman treated the question of the Church in Ireland as one which was totally without the pale of modern politics — that he thought it could never be revived or restored, and that, if it were, he saw immense difficulties arising from the Articles of Union? But if it were revived or restored, and if these difficulties were mooted, his imagination could not conceive

the possibility that in such a subject he should be mixed up. Well, that is evidence of what our leading men—men who guided the opinion not of their party only but of the country—thought of this great question. If that is not complete evidence of the view taken by Lord Palmerston and one of his chief ministers in this House with regard to the question of the Church in Ireland and its political position, I say that no evidence can satisfy any person. Notwithstanding all this, the question is suddenly brought before us.

Now, Sir, I take no exaggerated view of even the Articles of Union. I have not for a moment pretended that the Articles of Union between the two nations are irreversible. I have not for a moment pretended that the Articles of Union, and the great Acts of Parliament which were passed to carry them into effect, cannot by the consent of the Sovereign and of the estates of the realm be changed or modified. And this I will venture to say, that they are, as I think all must acknowledge, among the most solemn muniments of the nation, and I do say that it is preposterous that we should be asked to reverse such solemn muniments at eight days' notice. In the course of this debate I have heard hon. Gentlemen, referring to the Articles of Union and these Acts of Parliament, make remarks which seemed to me to strike at the root of all social security and political stability. We have been told that these Articles were negociated between a Protestant Parliament in Dublin and a Protestant Parliament in London.

Sir, you cannot trifle with the history of our country in that way. What was the Bill of Rights? Are you prepared to give up the Bill of Rights because it was passed by a Parliament of boroughmongers? If you adopt the principle

of analysing so finely the constituent elements of the public bodies that have negociated and agreed to the great documents which are the charters of the people's rights, you may invalidate our prime liberties and level a blow against the security of property and order, which has hitherto been the pride and the boast of this country. Taking these two points we endeavoured to comprise them in the Amendment. We expressed in the Amendment the opinion that until we had the report of the Royal Commission it would be inexpedient for the House to enter into the consideration of the Church in Ireland; and at the same time we expressed our opinion that the decision upon these great points should be reserved for the new Parliament. And then we are told that because we used the word "reserve" —a strictly Parliamentary word—we invited the next Parliament to enter into a discussion of this question. Now, you may depend upon it that the next Parliament will not much care for our invitation. If we think we are going to hoodwink or lead the next Parliament, or to deprive it of its fair privileges or prerogatives, we shall commit one of the greatest blunders ever committed by man. Why, Sir, in the free and frank expression of Parliamentary language, it is perfectly open to me or to any one else to contest the moral competence of this House to do a particular act, but surely hon. Gentleman would hardly have such language used in a formal resolution. Therefore, in that Amendment, we did not state that the House was not competent to enter into the discussion of this matter, but instead of using such explicit language we put it in a quieter and softer phrase, and said that the discussion ought to be reserved for a future Parliament.

These are the two points which were intended to be conveyed in this Amendment. According to all Parliamentary rule and precedent nothing can, to my mind, be

more unjustifiable in argument than the captious criticism which has been directed against this Amendment—criticism founded on an assumption which no one had a right to form. Well, Sir, the right hon Gentleman, in his opening speech, anticipated some of those criticisms, which it is unnecessary for me to notice. Perhaps I ought to notice the remarks which were made by the noble Lord the Member for Stamford. The noble Lord saw in this Amendment, of which I have given the House the plain history—I say the plain and true history—the noble Lord saw in the language of the Amendment great cause for mistrust and want of confidence. He saw immediately that we were about to betray the trust with which he deems us to be invested. The noble Lord is at no time wanting in imputing to us the being influenced by not the most amiable motives which can regulate the conduct of public men. I do not quarrel with the invective of the noble Lord. The noble Lord is a man of great talent, and he has vigour in his language. There is great vigour in his invective and no want of vindictiveness. I admit that, now speaking as a critic, and perhaps not as an impartial one, I must say I think it wants finish. Considering that the noble Lord has studied the subject, and that he has written anonymous articles against me before and since I was his colleague—I do not know whether he wrote them when I was his colleague—I think it must have been accomplished more *ad unguem*. There is one thing which the noble Lord never pardons, and that is the passing of the Reform Act of last year. But I put it to the House what would have been the general state of affairs if the counsels of the noble Lord upon that subject had prevailed instead of the suggestions which I made and which the House adopted? Now that we are free from the heat and the great difficulties

and perplexities of the last Session, and can take, I hope, a fair view of what occurred, I would express my opinion—and I think it is not peculiar to myself—that we passed last year a most beneficent and noble Act. I have not the slightest apprehension, and I do not speak of my personal connexion with the matter—but as the First Minister of the Crown—I look with no apprehension whatever to the appeal that will be made to the people under the provisions of the Act. I believe you will have a Parliament returned to this House full of patriotic and national sentiment, whose decision will add spirit to the community and strength to the State.

Sir, the only objection which I have to these attacks of the noble Lord is that they invariably produce an echo from the other side. That, it seems to me, is now almost a Parliamentary law. When the bark is heard on this side, the right hon. Member for Calne emerges, I will not say from his cave, but, perhaps, from a more cynical habitation. He joins immediately in the chorus of reciprocal malignity, and

"Hails with horrid melody the moon."

The right hon. Gentleman has been extremely analytical upon the Amendment of my noble Friend—the Amendment, that is, of the Government, moved by my noble Friend; and his "zig-zag" commentary, founded on the assumption of circumstances that never occurred, and motives that never influenced us, was amusing at the moment. But how far does that commentary agree with the real statement I have given of the cause and origin of this Amendment?

The right hon. Gentleman was extremely exuberant in his comments upon my character and career. I will not trouble the House with a defence of that character and career. I have sat in this House more than thirty years, and can truly

say that during that time comments upon my character and career have been tolerably free. But the House has been the jury of my life, and it allows me now here to address it; and therefore here is not the place in which I think it necessary to vindicate myself. The hon. Gentleman the Member for Calne is a very remarkable man. He is a learned man, though he despises history. He can chop logic like Dean Aldrich, but what is more remarkable than his learning and his logic is that power of spontaneous aversion which particularizes him. There is nothing that he likes, and almost everything that he hates. He hates the working classes of England. He hates the Roman Catholics of Ireland. He hates the Protestants of Ireland. He hates Her Majesty's Ministers. And until the right hon. Gentleman the member for South Lancashire placed his hand upon the ark, he seemed almost to hate the right hon. Gentleman the member for South Lancashire. But now all is changed. Now we have the hour and the man. But I believe the clock goes wrong, and the man is mistaken.

Let me now ask the attention of the House to the proposition before us. If I have for a moment trespassed upon their attention they will allow me to say that it has been in fair self-defence. I have never attacked any one in my life (*loud cries of "Oh!" and "Peel!"*), unless I was first assailed. Now, Sir, no one can deny this, that the propositions of the right hon. Gentlemen are very considerable. They are vast and violent. All admit that [*cries of "No!"*]. Well, hon. Gentlemen say, "No;" but to disestablish an institution that has existed 300 years, that is in the possession of property, that is certainly supported by the sympathies of a great part of the population of the country—to propose to subvert such an institution—without now going into the merits of the case—is surely a vast and violent change.

Well, then, the first question I will ask is, "Why this change?" and upon that point we have had no satisfactory answer. We are told that there is a crisis in Ireland, and the hon. Member for Birmingham the other night, with, I must say, one of those characteristics which he invariably displays, but in an agreeable manner, that of misrepresentation, said that I denied that there was anything critical in the state of Ireland, and that Ireland was, so far as my opinions were concerned, in a perfectly satisfactory state. Why, Sir, I never said that Ireland was in a satisfactory state. In a great debate like this the House will, I am sure, be indulgent to me if I touch upon some of these topics. I denied that there was an Irish crisis according to the interpretation of the Member for South Lancashire. The Member for South Lancashire, when the late Parliament was dissolved not four years ago, was of opinion that the Irish Church was a question totally out of the pale of modern politics. He seemed to shrink from the profanation of the idea that he or any human being could ever disturb it. And yet he is the man who comes forward to abolish that institution. Well, I must look to the grounds upon which he founds such a violent proceeding. He said there was a crisis in Ireland, and as I thought at the time with dangerous candour he analyzed that crisis and gave its causes and its elements. And what were they? Fenianism was one. Fenianism when he was a Minister was rampant and mysterious, and the more dangerous because it was mysterious. Fenianism now is not rampant; we think we have gauged its lowest depths, and we are not afraid of it. That is one of the evidences and elements of this crisis. Does it not seem rather strange that though Fenianism was so critical when he was a Minister we heard nothing of the crisis, but when I am Minister and Fenianism is so subdued, it is made the principal argument for a revolution?

Well, what was the second element of the right hon. Gentleman? He said there was a startling and dangerous emigration from the country. I never liked the emigration from Ireland. I have deplored it. I know that the finest elements of political power are men, and therefore I have not sympathized with the political economists who would substitute entirely for men animals of a lower organization. I never heard an opinion of that kind from the right hon. Gentleman. I have always understood that the right hon. Gentleman and his friends looked on "the depletion" of Ireland not without satisfaction. But this I know, that the emigration from Ireland has lasted now for a considerable number of years, during most of which the right hon. Gentleman was a leading Minister of the Crown, and yet he never said that in consequence of that emigration the state of Ireland was critical. And I know that now when I have the honour to be a Minister of the Crown, and view still with anxiety the emigration from that country, though I have the satisfaction of seeing that it is reduced, the right hon. Gentleman says this also is an element in the crisis of Ireland. Well, then, how am I to understand that the second element of the crisis is one which can really be advanced as an argument in favour of a great revolution?

Then, Sir, another element of the right hon. Gentleman was education. The people of Ireland were so educated that you must destroy the Irish Church. Well, the people of Ireland have been educated a great number of years, thank God, and I wish the people of England had been educated as well. I am not aware that the education of the Irish people during the two short years we have sat upon this bench has created the Irish crisis. The education of the Irish people has been very advantageous to them; and I am not aware that I have been one of the Members of this House who

have done anything to restrict that education. As for the fourth cause of the crisis, I should have thought that, having passed a Reform Bill last year, that was a reason why we should have lost no time in passing a Reform Bill for Ireland. Instead of doing that we are to acknowledge a crisis. I say, under these circumstances, I was certainly justified in utterly repudiating the principle upon which the whole policy of the right hon. Gentleman is founded—namely, that there is a crisis in Ireland; but the hon. Member for Birmingham is not justified in saying, from my adoption of that argument, that I assert that the state of Ireland is perfectly satisfactory, that nothing need be done, and that the whole agitation is a delusion.

As I cannot admit that there is a crisis in Ireland according to the views of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for South Lancashire, I will state my view of the condition of Ireland. I do not think there is an Irish crisis, but if there be one it is not occasioned by any of the causes mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman. But I say, and I have said it very often, that the condition of Ireland is, on the whole, not entirely satisfactory. The general proposition the right hon. Gentleman has placed before us is the foundation of what I look upon as a great change, and I may say a revolution in our policy; and the circumstances on which he based it ranged over 700 years. The premises from which the right hon. Gentleman drew his deductions were 700 years. Well, how can we, when a great statesman comes forward, all of a sudden, like a thief in the night, and recommends a course so vast and violent, that as yet we have got as it were only into the antechamber of the great discussion it will involve—I say when the right hon. Gentleman brings forward such vast premises, and draws his conclusions from them, what can we do, in the first instance, at least, but

take general views? If a man tells me that my country is in a critical state in consequence of the misgovernment of 700 years, as a sensible and prudent man I must take general views; but I take general views within a very limited range. I compare the state of Ireland and its people, not when they were under the tender mercies of ancient historical characters, but I take a limited practical view. Is the condition of the Irish people now worse than it was before the Union? So far as my researches guide me you find the people of Ireland are in a much better position. They are in the enjoyment of social and political rights they did not then possess; they are better fed, better clothed, and better paid than they were. So much for the working population. The middle class are more wealthy, and more enterprising; and the landlords, upon whom such attacks are made, have an advantage which English landlords do not always have—they get their rents paid. Is the condition of Ireland worse at this moment, when we are called upon precipitately to take this serious step, than it was during the revolutionary war? Were the people then better clothed and better fed? were their wages higher or as high? You know they were not. Take the time when the tithe-proctors were fighting the people. Was the condition of Ireland then to be at all compared with its condition now? Is it not an absolute fact that all classes of the population in Ireland at this moment are more prosperous, are wealthier, are in the enjoyment of political and social rights which their ancestors and predecessors did not enjoy fifty years ago? Is it not true that the working population are at this moment in the enjoyment of a higher rate of wages, and consequently in a higher state of social enjoyment, than at any previous period of their history?

Well, Sir, that has been urged—it has never been an-

swered. The Chief Secretary of the Lord-Lieutenant, in a statement full of the most accurate information and weighty argument, placed that before the House, and not a single Gentleman opposite for a moment impugned the accuracy of his facts or the soundness of his conclusions. Well, how are we met? A statesman who in this position of affairs makes the enormous sacrifice of all the convictions of his life, tells us that the state of Ireland is so critical that he must do that which only three years ago, when mentioned, struck him with such inexpressible horror, he said the question was without the pale of political debate. I want to know on what ground he does this. The candid ingenuity of several Gentlemen opposite gives us the ground—the evils of Ireland. We have proved that the country is richer, the people are more prosperous, the landlords have their rents, the middle-class are perpetually engaging in speculation and shares, and the working population have doubled their wages. Since that has been proved and acknowledged even by hon. Gentlemen opposite, because it could no longer be denied, the whole thing, this wide-spread discontent, this constant disaffection, and the perilous position of the Church in Ireland, is explained by the fact, the recent discovery, that though the evils of Ireland are not materially increased there are moral evils, there are sentimental evils to be redressed. We are called upon now to argue the question—not as in recent times when we had to discuss the political and material condition of Ireland, but we are asked to take a vast and violent step because the people of Ireland are suffering under a moral, or, as it has been styled, a sentimental grievance.

Well, Sir, I am not the man to despise a sentimental grievance. I think he takes a very contracted view of life and of human nature who despises the sentimental grievances

of a nation; but when we have to deal with sentimental grievances, and when in consequence of sentimental grievances we are asked to make very material changes, I think every candid mind will agree that we ought to proceed with caution. Though we may be ready to make very great sacrifices to soothe the pride and gratify the feeling of race, still to take some precipitate step and fail in accomplishing our desire would be disastrous to the State and humiliating to the statesman. Now, what are those sentimental grievances of the Irish people? I am not conscious that I have ever been deficient in sympathy for the Irish people. They have engaging qualities, which I think every man who has any heart must respect. But I must say nothing surprises me more than the general conduct of the Irish people on this subject of sentimental grievances. They are a race who are certainly among the bravest of the brave, most ingenious, witty, very imaginative, and therefore very sanguine; but for them to go about the world announcing that they are a conquered race, does appear to me the most extraordinary thing in the world. All of us, nations and individuals, are said to have a skeleton in the house. I do not say that I have not one. I hope I have not—if I had I would turn the key upon him. But for the Irish ostentatiously to declare that they are a conquered race is very strange. If they really were a conquered race, they are not the people who ought to announce it. It is the conquerors from whom we should learn the fact, for it is not the conquered who should go about the world and announce their shame and humiliation.

But I entirely deny that the Irish are a conquered race. I deny that they are more of a conquered race than the people of any other nation. Therefore, I cannot see that there is any real ground for the doleful tone in which they complain that they are the most disgraced of men, and make

that the foundation for the most unreasonable requests. Ireland is not one whit more conquered than England. They are always telling us that the Normans conquered Ireland. Well, I have heard that the Normans conquered England too, and the only difference between the two conquests is that while the conquest of Ireland was only partial that of England was complete. Then they tell us that was a long time ago, but since then there was a dreadful conquest by Cromwell, when Cromwell not only conquered the people, but confiscated their estates. But Cromwell conquered England. He conquered the House of Commons. He ordered that bauble to be taken away, in consequence of which an hon. Member, I believe of very advanced Liberal opinions, the other night proposed that we should raise a statue to his memory. But Cromwell not only conquered us, but he forfeited and sequestrated estates in every county in England. Well, Sir, then we are told that the Dutch conquered Ireland, but, unfortunately, they conquered England, too. They marched from Devonshire to London through the midst of a grumbling population. But the Irish fought like gentlemen for their Sovereign, and there is no disgrace in the battle of the Boyne, nor does any shame attach to the sword of Sarsfield. I wish I could say as much for the conduct of the English leaders at that time. Therefore, the habit of the Irish coming forward on all occasions to say that they are a conquered race, and, in consequence of their being a conquered race they must destroy the English institutions, is a most monstrous thing.

Then we are told that the Church in Ireland is a badge of this conquest. Well, Sir, I will not go into the question as to the origin of the Irish Church. I hope that nothing shall induce me to enter into a controversy as to whether St. Patrick was a Protestant or not. But I ask this

plain question from this conquered race—who attain an eminent position in every country where wars are successful—why is the Church of Ireland more a badge of conquest to the Roman Catholics of that country than the Church of England is to the Dissenters? There is this difference, that according to their own story countless generations almost have elapsed since the Roman Catholics were in possession of these churches in Ireland, while in England there was a great change within comparatively modern times, the fact being that one meets almost every day in England the descendants of some one or other of the ejected ministers, but we never meet a burly Nonconformist who tells us that he is a member of a conquered race, and that he regards the Church of England as a badge of conquest. The Dissenter disapproves of the Church, and he hopes some day to terminate its existence as an Establishment, but he considers himself to be on perfectly equal terms. As far as their relation to the Church Establishment is concerned, what difference is there between the Roman Catholics of Ireland and the Nonconformists of this country, who are among the most wealthy, influential, and intelligent of Her Majesty's subjects, scores of whom, moreover, occupy seats in this House at the present moment? If there is any difference, the feelings of the English Dissenter ought to be more bitter than those of the Roman Catholic. That is, therefore, another point, so far as sentimental grievances are concerned, of which I really do hope we shall hear no more.

Now, Sir, I come to a more practical part of the question (*cheers*). I understand that cheer, but we shall never come to a solution of any of those questions unless we first arrive at clear ideas of what we mean. You wish to convey in that cheer that I have been speaking on subjects not germane to the question in hand. My answer is that it is impossible for any one to

grapple with the real points before us unless we clear the atmosphere of these nebulous illusions. Unless we get rid of "conquered races," of "badges of conquest," and things of that kind, we cannot realize what it is we have to do. We must be very cautious in respect to the great question now before the House and the country when we find it started by a man so eminent as the right hon. Member for South Lancashire on premises so utterly and absurdly fallacious. I say that it is not right to disestablish the Irish Church; and of this I am quite certain that it never can be right to argue that question on an assumed and fallacious crisis, which any man who has any knowledge of life knows has no existence. I have brought the discussion to this point, and I want now to ask the House to consider how we who sit on this bench have dealt with those grievances of Ireland on which I have touched. I say that during the period when I have had any lead in public life—now, I am sorry to say, more than twenty years—I have acted conscientiously on one principle alone, and there has not been a Gentleman on this bench, or on the opposite bench, when we were in Opposition, but gave me on that point unswerving and complete sympathy and adhesion. In what I recommended to be done I had the sanction and support of all my colleagues now in the present Cabinet, of all who sat in a responsible position on the bench opposite, and, I can say, even the sanction of the noble Lord the Member for Stamford.

What was the policy we pursued with respect to Ireland? Our policy was one of conciliation. Most of us entered public life when there had been the fiercest acrimony between Irish parties. Some hon. Gentlemen now sitting in this House can hardly realize the sentiments then entertained towards one another by Irish members of

different religions, and English members of different parties who sympathized with their co-religionists. But about twenty-five years ago English statesmen had arrived at a conclusion, advantageous both for England and Ireland, that we should have a policy of conciliation, and that we should endeavour as far as we could, to remove anomalies, soften asperities, and encourage between the two religions and races a more living and direct sympathy. The principles of our policy were,—first, in Ireland to create and not destroy; and, secondly, to acknowledge that you could not in any more effectual way strengthen the Protestant interest than by doing justice to the Roman Catholics. On those principles we acted. The right hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Huntingdon, in a speech which he made last night, and which the House heard with that interest with which it always welcomes the observations of the right hon. Gentleman, alluded with pride, and with justifiable pride, to what he had done with regard to the appointment of Roman Catholic chaplains in the army. The right hon. Gentleman, though he took that course spontaneously, did so entirely with the sympathy of his colleagues.

The House will remember that much discussion occurred on a recent occasion respecting the appointment of Roman Catholic chaplains in gaols. That measure was not proposed by us, but the Government of that day were in great stress concerning it, and we supported them, although they were opposed by many of their own party, and although many on this side of the House disapproved the course they took. We, however, were convinced that course was based on right principles, and it would not have been adopted but for our assistance, to which a speech of unrivalled power by the right hon. Member for Oxfordshire (Mr. Henley) largely contributed. On a subsequent occa-

sion we had before us the oath to be taken by the Roman Catholics. I have seldom considered a question which occasioned me more anxiety and pain, but it was brought to a satisfactory conclusion greatly by the influence of hon. Gentlemen on these benches, and the oath which was ultimately adopted, with slight variations, by Parliament, was drawn by the present Lord Chancellor of England, who, I believe, was never suspected of being false to the principles of Protestantism. Through all these endeavours to carry out a principle of conciliation I have invariably been supported by my right hon. Friend the Secretary for the Home Department. In the same spirit we have brought forward a proposition to grant a charter to a Roman Catholic University. I need not comment upon the "zigzag" criticisms of the right hon. Member for Calne, but I understand our proposal has been commented upon during my absence this evening.

Sir, I believe that proposal was perfectly consistent with the principle we have laid down that in Ireland the wise policy is to create and not to destroy, and to strengthen Protestant institutions by being just to the Roman Catholics. Sir, I believe, the proposal to grant a charter to a Roman Catholic University was conceived entirely in that spirit. Hon. Gentlemen opposite say,—"Take hold of Trinity College; appropriate its property, destroy its constitution, tear its charters to shreds; that is the way to conciliate the people, that is the way to reconcile parties and creeds in Ireland." But that is not the policy which I and my colleagues conceived. We have determined to create and never to destroy in Ireland. There has been too much destruction, I say; therefore, we shall maintain all we have said in support of our proposition for a charter. I do not wish to conceal that it is one which I believe responds to the legitimate demands of the Roman Catholics. It will at the same time

maintain that great University of Dublin, which is one of the greatest Universities in the country.

No one will question for one moment but that there is a want of educational means for the higher classes of the Roman Catholic population in Ireland, though people may differ as to the way by which it should be satisfied. I say it is wise to satisfy that want by a mode which creates and does not destroy. That is in accordance with our uniform policy, and in conformity also with the policy which hon. Gentlemen opposite have hitherto pursued with the same integrity of purpose and sincerity of feeling as we believe we are able to claim for ourselves. And why have hon. Gentlemen opposite pursued this policy with us? Because the experience of the past has taught us that it was wise to do that which would of all things tend to effect a reconciliation between creeds and classes, and put an end to the unsatisfactory state of feeling in Ireland. We have been subjected to the usual taunts; nothing is so easy as to say that we do this thing to gain the Catholic vote, that we do another to obtain a majority or maintain a position. But whether in office or in Opposition it has been the same, and these taunts pass by us without the slightest effect upon our course. The same taunts, indeed, have been levelled at our opponents, but never by me.

Well, let us look at this policy as applied to the Church in Ireland, which is the question before us. We have attempted to conciliate creeds. We have endeavoured to bring about a state of society by which every man in Ireland should feel that he was in a position of the same equality as he would enjoy in England. Whether the measures were proposed and passed by us or by our opponents, I do not think that policy has hitherto been unsuccessful. There has been a difference in the tone even of the Members of this House as

compared with what it was a quarter of a century ago. Out of this House there has been a very great change. But what is the policy of the right hon. Gentleman? He comes forward to propose a change which will at once outrage the feelings, and touch the dearest sentiments and interests of a large and very influential portion of the population of Ireland. Year after year we have in this House endeavoured to secure to the Roman Catholics, and especially to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, the full and free exercise of their religion. There is not a gentleman opposite, however he may vote, who does not in his heart know that is true. I am not referring to a Session, I am not referring to a Parliament, but I am referring to the long and patient and continuous policy which we have pursued even under the unfavourable circumstances and discouragements of opposition—the policy that the Roman Catholics should have a full and free exercise of their religion; and although it entailed upon us much prejudice and misapprehension among friends whom we respected and regarded, we were firm to that policy, because we believed it to be right and wise, and that it would lead to that general sympathy and conciliation to which I have adverted.

But what does the right hon. Gentleman propose? Have the Protestants of Ireland no interest in their faith? Have they no regard for their Church? Has their history not identified them with that institution? Have the Protestants of Ireland no sentimental feelings which are to be regarded? And what are we to think of the statesman who, having, as I suppose, sanctioned the policy which I have indicated, comes forward at this moment to introduce to us not merely a measure but a policy which must revive all the acrimony of which we had hoped to get rid—which must call into existence all those inveterate and rancorous feelings which we have sought to eradicate—which places all classes

and creeds in an adverse position, and renders that country again the scene of every hostile passion, of every sentiment which is opposed to that political tranquillity which all great statesmen have striven to produce?

Now, I say, with regard to the Church in Ireland that if his policy of conciliation had been pursued I cannot doubt that we might have come to conclusions which would have greatly facilitated the objects that we wished to accomplish. The reform in the Irish Church, which took place in the year 1833, was effected by Lord Derby. It has been criticised of late years as a measure the arrangements of which were deficient in completeness. But in my mind it was a measure which showed the vigour and determination of a real statesman. When we consider the state of affairs at that time as regards the Church in Ireland with which Lord Derby had to deal, I think we must admire the determination and the grasp of his conception. But there is no doubt that some forty years have elapsed since that period, and those forty years have brought, not only with reference to the Church in Ireland but to the Church in England and many other institutions, very instructive results.

Sir, the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Calne, the other night—I just mention this in passing—said there was an inconsistency—that was the gravest charge which he brought against my noble Friend—an inconsistency between my noble Friend's amendment and his speech, because my noble Friend stated that he was ready to alter, or was prepared to consider the alteration of, the *status* of the Church in Ireland. I was informed to-day by a friend that when Lord Derby proposed his great change for the reformation of the Church of Ireland it was opposed, because it was said that he had altered the *status* of the Church in Ireland. But now we

know better than they did forty years ago. We know that Lord Derby never altered the *status* of the Church in that sense. The Church, as an Established Church, was not at all affected by the legislation of Lord Derby, and, therefore, the right hon. Gentleman (Mr. Lowe) will just remember that the use of the word *status* may be such as he might not adopt. I myself said the other night, as I say now, that I think you might elevate the *status* of the unendowed clergy of Ireland. But I do not mean by elevating their *status* that revolution in their position which the right hon. Gentleman chooses to fix upon my noble Friend. My opinion is that if this system of conciliation, founded on the principle that in Ireland you ought to create and not to destroy, had been pursued, you might have elevated the Irish Church greatly to its advantage. You might have rendered it infinitely more useful—you might have removed circumstances which are not favourable to its reputation. At the same time I do not think it impossible that you might have introduced measures which would have elevated the *status* of the unendowed clergy of Ireland, and so softened and terminated those feelings of inequality, which now exist, so that you might have had the same equality in the state of Ireland which you have in England. There is perfect equality in the state of the Dissenter in England, although his is not an Established Church. That state of things might exist in Ireland if you had taken measures which would, among a sensitive people, have prevented a sentiment of humiliation.

Saying thus much, allow me to add that the policy recommended by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for South Lancashire involves issues in my mind much more important than the government of Ireland. And I would ask the House for a moment to consider what would be the effect

of the proposal of the right hon. Gentleman upon the property of the country. Now, I am not going to impress upon the House the importance of respecting a prescriptive title of 300 years. I recognize fully that there is a difference, so far as the State is concerned, between public and private property. But the various shades between them, although they are numerous, blend, and dangerously blend, and it is of much importance that when you deal even with public property you should deal with it in a manner so thoughtful, so learned, and so wise, that you should not endanger the principle of private property. All that I pass aside, and I leave it to gentlemen on both sides well to weigh what may be the consequences of interfering with a prescriptive title of 300 years. What effect it may have on the estates of the great City Companies I stop not to inquire. What effect the principle by which it is recommended in Ireland may have even upon the estates of private individuals whose property has arisen from the plunder of the Church I stop not to ask. I believe there are abbeys in Ireland, and there are many in England, that are no longer enjoyed by abbots. I do not dwell upon these things. I remind the House on the general consideration not to forget them. I view with great jealousy the plunder of a Church, because, so far as history can guide me, I have never found that Churches are plundered except to establish or enrich oligarchies; and although it may be a very liberal movement to attack an ecclesiastical institution, I have never found that the consequences were in favour of liberty or enlightened feeling.

But what I want to impress upon the House is this, that there is a new view of the case with regard to the question of property in the course adopted by the right hon. Gentleman. The principle of property is contested in the age in

which we live. I am not alarmed by that, because I think the principle of property may be established on the strongest and soundest arguments that the human intellect can conceive. But we cannot shut our eyes to what the hon. Member for Birmingham calls "the spirit of the age," and which entirely influences him in the advice which he gives to the right hon. Gentleman the Member for South Lancashire. In the present day the principle of property, even of private property, has been contested, and Ireland, unfortunately, is not an exception to the countries in which that political dogma has been promulgated. Observe what the proposition of the right hon. Gentleman involves. I can understand a man, for example, taking up this position,—"Three hundred years ago the churches of Ireland were ministered by priests of the Roman Catholic faith, and were filled by communicants of the Roman Catholic creed. You ejected our ministers 300 years ago, you expelled our congregations and drove them to a distant part of the island—now our opportunity is come, the hour and the man have both arrived, now we will regain what we have lost, and the Protestant populations and the Protestant ministers shall leave the churches." That, undoubtedly, would be a violation of property, the prescription of the Protestant population, of three centuries' duration, would be violated; and to that degree the principle of property would be outraged. But, then, the principle of property would be vindicated in a much higher degree by the principle of restitution, and so it might be contended that there was no violation of property at all. These persons might say, "We are only restoring property to the original owners, and we announce it as a principle so sacred that even 300 years of abuse shall not prevent us from acknowledging its sacredness.

But the right hon. Gentleman does nothing of the kind.

He goes to the Church of Ireland, he takes all its property, and he does not tell us what he is going to do with it. There is no restitution to palliate or excuse the proceeding; it is sheer confiscation. And, therefore, I say that the principle proposed for your sanction in this scheme, by which the right hon. Gentleman can pounce upon all the property of the Church in Ireland and not tell you what he is going to do with it, is an outrage and a violation of the principle of property, than which nothing greater or more enormous can be conceived. In a parenthesis the right hon. Gentleman told us that the property would be preserved and only used for Irish purposes.

Well, as was truly said by my right hon. Friend, what are those Irish purposes? Reduction of the duties upon whisky would be an Irish purpose; is that what he means? I hope the House of Commons will not consent to move in the dark on such an important subject as this. I say that the proposition of the right hon. Gentleman, as explained in his speech, does involve an attack on the principle of property, which has never yet been—I will not say mooted in Parliament, but which has scarcely found a place in the speculations of the most abstract philosophers. For, although there have been propositions before now to attack the property of national institutions, no proposition of this kind has ever been made by a Minister of the Crown, or one standing in the responsible position of leader of the Opposition. No one has ever yet attempted to attack the public property of this country, who has not at the same time indicated to the country with what intention he lays hands upon the property which he thus appropriates. Knowing what we all know, that the plunder of churches, which are the property of the people, has never yet produced anything for the people, I say that we ought to look carefully

at this proposition, which leaves us entirely in the dark. I say we ought to look with the greatest jealousy on such a proposition. I cannot under any circumstances, whatever you may do with the property of the Church of Ireland, which I hope we shall succeed in preventing your touching at all—I cannot, under any circumstances, agree that it should be appropriated to what in Liberal language is called a secular purpose. A secular purpose is always a job. Church property is the property of the people set apart for a specific purpose—namely, their spiritual instruction. There is a great lack of funds for spiritual instruction. The religious education of the people has been much neglected in this country, owing to the great plunder of the Church, and the plunder of the Church has invariably been the appropriation of public property to private individuals. I trust, therefore, that we shall hear no more of that.

There is another subject to which before I sit down I must call the serious consideration of the House. I feel that I have unfortunately somewhat trespassed upon their attention, but the house is generous and it feels that this is an occasion on which it is scarcely an intrusion on my part to crave their indulgence. I have to place before them one of the greatest issues ever offered to their consideration, and that somewhat suddenly. The conflict has come upon us when we little expected it, and it is necessary that the House and the country should understand what they have to decide. The right hon. Gentleman who preceded me (Mr. Cardwell) was nervously alive upon that subject. He said, "We must have a clear and intelligible issue before the country." Well, so far as I am concerned, the issue shall be clear and intelligible. I have touched upon this question with regard to Ireland by itself, and I have shown how completely contrary to the policy which

the wisest statesmen have pursued, even at great personal sacrifice, for a quarter of a century, is the policy suddenly recommended to us by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for South Lancashire. No more conciliation; no more hope of reconciling creeds and classes; no more hope by prudent arrangement of securing in a country of anomalies, no doubt, and full of historical difficulties, what I thought we were arriving at, by achieving that equality in the State which the subjects of the Queen enjoy in England.

All that is past. The great philosophers and physicians of the State are of opinion that such equality can only be accomplished by outraging the dearest feelings and invading the interests of a population not inconsiderable, very influential, and the most important portion of the Irish people. The policy of conciliation, sanctioned by Peel, supported with admirable eloquence by Graham, from which Palmerston did not recoil, to which Lord Russell gave his adhesion, and in which I once thought the right hon. Gentleman opposite would have worked with me—it is gone. For Protestant ascendency, which really no longer existed, is to be substituted, I suppose, Papal supremacy. All that we have attempted for years to accomplish is to be obliterated, and Ireland is still to be the scene of faction, is still to be the difficulty of England. That is what you are bringing about at a moment when we seemed on the verge of accomplishing what for a quarter of a century we have been labouring for.

I have asked the House to consider the altered circumstances of the case, and I have begged the House to reflect for a moment on what might be the influence on property of the policy recommended by the right hon. Gentleman. I now come to another and more important ulterior consequence. If that policy is carried into effect, the connexion between the State and the Church in Ireland ceases; the Government of Ireland is divorced from the principle of religion, which hitherto

has been acknowledged as part of our national policy. Now, what is meant by the union between Church and State? In this crisis, I say, it is of great importance that we should fully understand what we mean by a connexion between Church and State. I will give my version of it. I understand by it that authority is to be not merely political; that Government is to be not merely an affair of force, but is to recognise its responsibility to the Divine Power.

Sir, we have discarded the divine right of Kings, and properly discarded it, because the divine right of Kings led to the abuse of supernatural power by individuals; but an intelligent age will never discard the divine right of government. If government is not divine it is nothing. It is a mere affair of the police-office, of the tax-gatherer, of the guard-room. Now, Sir, any man who has had any experience of affairs knows this—that every year government becomes more difficult. It is its connexion with the religious principle—it is not the guard-room, it is not the police-office—it is not the tax-gatherer—which enables it to rule the nation. You must educate—educate the people. You must reform the criminal, you must establish asylums to meet all the wants of injured and suffering society. These are the duties of Government. In their performance, the Government is perpetually applied to, is perpetually called upon, and how are we to perform those offices unless we are in connexion with religious bodies? It is the principle of religion which makes a Government sensible and conscious that it has to perform these duties; and having to perform these duties, it requires an agency by which it can accomplish them.

I am totally at a loss to see how we can connect Government with religion except by an Establishment. One of the things which the right hon. Gentleman who preceded me

wanted was an intelligible issue. I give him a clear and intelligible issue. I want to know how we can connect the Government with religion except by an Establishment. It is very true that in a country like England, where we have the advantage of complete toleration, we may have an Establishment which is not the Church that represents the entire majority of the country: but we cannot judge of the influence of an Established Church by the mere influence of its Ministers or by the number of those in communion with it. We must recollect the influence which the existence of such an Establishment has on those who are not communicants with that Church. The great sectarian parties of this country, so full of learning and spirit, so highly disciplined and organized—what would they have been without the Church of England, the archetype which produced the great competition of charity which is the characteristic of the age and the century in which we live?

Well, if you admit this principle you ought to hesitate very much as to the course you are taking. What are you doing as regards Ireland? Are you prepared to say that the Government in Ireland shall be a Government disconnected from the principle of religion? Are you prepared to say that? If you are not prepared to say that, how is government in Ireland to be connected with the principle of religion? Tell me that. Will you endow the Presbyterian Church in Ireland? Why, all the objections which you allege against the Anglican Church will equally apply to the Presbyterian Church. Its population is not more considerable. Well, will you connect with the State the Roman Church? ("*No!*") You say "No!" We know there are some persons who say "Yes!" But you are right in saying "No." There is no doubt it is utterly impracticable. The United Kingdom is a Protestant kingdom. The people of the United Kingdom are a Protestant people.

They defend and cherish a Protestant throne, and any attempt in Ireland to establish a Roman Church in connexion with the State is a dream which no practical man would allow himself to indulge in.

Well, if you cannot establish the Kirk, if you cannot establish the Church of Rome, then, if you are going to destroy the Protestant Episcopal Church you come to this point—you will have a government in Ireland that is not connected with the religious principle. This appears to me to be a logical consequence; and at this moment, if you believe with me that the union between Church and State is a great security for civilization and for religious liberty ("*No!*"), I say, if you agree with me in this—I am only trying to do as the right hon. Member for Oxford (Mr. Cardwell) asked, to arrive at a clear and intelligible issue—you must acknowledge that there is no possible means by which you can maintain that union but by maintaining the Church in Ireland. Reform or modify her if you will, make her more efficient if you can, but unless you are prepared to give up the connexion between Church and State, which is the connexion of authority tempered by the civilizing power of religion, you must maintain the Church. You cannot stir from that position; you must accept one of these two alternatives.

Sir—in connexion with the point—comments were made in the course of this varied debate by, as I understand, the hon. and learned Member for Exeter (Mr. Coleridge) to-night, by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Calne, and by the right hon. Member for the City of London (Mr. Göschen), with reference to a letter which I wrote, and to which I will draw the attention of the House, if it will permit me. The right hon. Member for the City of London said I wrote a letter to the clergy, telling them that the Church was in danger; they have all preached in consequence, and this has produced a considerable effect. Now, there was a

letter written once by a Prime Minister* to a clergyman. He did not say the Church was in danger. The letter was written to the Dean of Durham, and it called out "No Popery." I think that must have misled the right hon. Gentleman. My letter was not written to a clergyman, but to a layman. It was not sent to *The Times* newspaper, as the Member for Calne said, nor to any other newspaper.

Mr. LOWE.—The Member for Calne never said so.

Mr. DISRAELI.—The right hon. Member for Calne said it was sent to *The Times*, and that he read it in *The Times*.

Mr. LOWE.—I said it appeared in *The Times*. I never said that the right hon. Gentleman sent it to *The Times*.

Mr. DISRAELI.—No; you only said that it appeared there the same morning as the Amendment of my noble Friend.

Mr. LOWE.—I did not say that. On the contrary, I said it appeared the morning before the Amendment appeared.

Mr. DISRAELI.—You misdated the letter, you misquoted the letter, and you misconceived the letter. I am now speaking upon the connexion between Church and State. That letter exactly expresses the feelings which influence me at this moment, and when the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Calne says that I wrote a letter trying to excite the Protestant feelings of the country, let the letter be judged by what it contains, and by nothing more. What was said by the right hon. Gentleman was totally inconsistent with what was said by the hon. and learned Member for Exeter respecting this letter. There is nothing about Protestant feeling in it; and with regard to the right hon. Member for the City, who says I wrote a letter declaring that the Church was in danger, the City churches may be in danger, but he totally misunderstood what I wrote. I did not say that the Church was in danger. I said the State was in danger. Terminate the connexion between the

* Earl Russell.

State and the Church; divorce authority from the religious principle; you will find the State in danger, not the Church, when it thus loses the high sanction and the high influences which animate a nation.

I ask again, is it or is it not true that if the policy of the right hon. Gentleman is adopted you terminate the connexion in Ireland between Government and the Church? Is it or is it not true? Let us have a clear answer to that. (Opposition cheers.) You admit it. Can you resist the consequences of your admission? (Cries of "Hear, hear!" from the Opposition.) Your "Hear, hear!" will some day be remembered by yourselves with astonishment, and perhaps remorse. There is more in that "Hear, hear!" than you or than England conceives. You will terminate the connexion between Church and State in Ireland;—why should you stop there? If the "hear-hearers" are to have their way I can completely understand the policy that is brought before us. But what I want is that the House of Commons and England should understand what is the clear and intelligible issue the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Oxford is so anxious to ascertain. Well, if you adopt the principle of separation between Church and State in Ireland there is no reason why you should not adopt it in Scotland. ("Hear, hear" from Mr. Craufurd.) I like to hear that cheer. There is nothing that advances discussion more than the spontaneous sympathy of hon. gentlemen opposite. The Church of Scotland has in its communion only a minority of the people, and I want to know upon what principle you can maintain the Kirk in Scotland if you do not maintain the Church in Ireland. Well, then, it is admitted that, the majority not being within the pale of the Scottish Kirk, Scotland may also follow the policy of the right hon. Member for South Lancashire. Why stop at Scotland? Are you prepared for the ulterior consequences of this policy? That is what I want to have thoroughly

understood by the people of this country. Let there be, as the right hon. Member for Oxford says, "a clear and intelligible issue." Well, the Church falls in Ireland, it falls in Scotland, but it is never to fall in England, because the right hon. Gentleman says there are millions upon millions of Churchmen in England. That is rhetoric, it is not reason. Why, the hon. Member for Birmingham, that great master of the mind of the right hon. Member for South Lancashire—we have heard of educating; why, he too can educate,—that hon. Gentleman will take the census returns, and with that analysis which his shrewd intellect is so well able to regulate and control he will prove that it is a very clear conclusion from the statistical documents in his hand that the union between Church and State,—that union between authority and religion which has humanized authority, civilized this country, and secured to us civil and religious liberty,—cannot be maintained. I am sure that hon. Members will not object to my stating at some length my opinion upon this subject.

The question is only now at its commencement. Years will elapse before it is decided. It is very easy for the right hon. Gentleman to propose resolutions, but he must allow us to try, especially as I was challenged on the subject to-night, that a clear issue should be put before the people of England. Now let us look at the case of England. Here I have a letter written to me by a dignitary of the Welsh Church, a proctor in convocation, one who I think must be a respectable and cultivated gentleman, because he is a friend of the right hon. Member for South Lancashire. He has been a great supporter of the right hon. Gentleman at Oxford, and in a county with which he is intimately connected, and, though in a state of great distress, on account of the state of affairs, he still regards the right hon. Gentleman with feelings of affection. In this communication he begs to call my attention

to the immediate effects of the policy of that distinguished statesman, whom he still regards with feelings of personal affection. He begs to call my attention to a Welsh Reform meeting (cries of "Where") held in Hope Hall, Liverpool, attended by delegates from twenty-two places. (Cries of "Oh, oh!" and a laugh.) Oh, I assure you it was a real meeting. It was a Liberal meeting—perhaps the hon. Gentleman opposite on that account doubts whether it could be a real one—and it was numerously attended. The writer of the letter is a dignitary of the Welsh Church, a most respectable man, an M.A. ("*Name.*") The right hon. Gentleman may have the name, but in discussion we have agreed not to give the name of every gentleman who sends us information. The meeting is called in consequence of the new policy, and the chairman, Mr. Owen Williams, maintains that the Welsh have a grievance to be redressed almost as great as this of the Irish Church. "It was absolutely necessary," he said, "that they should step aside and form a solid front. They had a Church question to deal with as well as the Irish people; and he did not see why Wales should be contented any longer to carry the burden put upon her. The Welsh had their Church question also; and it would be impossible for" myself, "Mr. Gladstone, or Mr. Bright to settle the Irish Church question without feeling at the same time that the present state of things in Wales could no longer exist." He ends in this way:—"The Welsh had also to deal with a land question." This shows the progress of the public mind. "It was almost impossible to obtain freehold land in Wales, where the population had doubled itself during the last thirty years. He could see no justice in that state of things. He could not see why the great landowners should become the possessors of all the improvements effected by commerce, industry, and

skill." At the close of an excellent speech the chairman intimated it was probable the next meeting would be addressed by the Right Hon. Member for South Lancashire.

This was the letter sent to me. I will not pass it over to the Right Hon. Gentleman because he had one handed to him the other evening, and he will not desire another. I have quoted it to show you the consequences of the new policy. Whether the policy is right or wrong is another question; but do not let the House misconceive the crisis which has arrived. Well, then, we come to the question of England. I believe in Wales there are very few benefices in which there is a majority of Churchmen, and I ask the House on what principle can you refuse to apply to Scotland and to Wales the same principle you are applying to Ireland? I ask you how can you meet the question of England? Let not hon. Members around me say there are millions and millions in England who are members of the Established Church. That does not answer the stern conclusion from the Census returns, viz.: that in England the majority of the people are not members of the Church. Well, then, are you prepared to say, notwithstanding that, that the civil authority shall not be divorced from religion? I know very well the difficulties we have to contend with now. I know very well what are the powers that are now, and have been for some time, meeting together and joining to produce the consequences which some anticipate, and which I hope may yet be defeated. No man can have watched what has taken place in this country during the last ten years without being prepared, if he be of a thoughtful mind, for the crisis of this country. I repeat the expression that I used in my letter to Lord Dartmouth, that the crisis of England is now fast arriving. High Church Ritualists and the Irish followers of the Pope have been

long in secret combination, and are now in open confederacy. (Laughter.)

Yes, but it is a fact. It is confessed by those who attempted to prevent this combination, to mitigate the occurrence, to avoid the conjuncture which we always felt would be most dangerous to the country. They have combined to destroy that great blessing of conciliation which both parties in the State for the last quarter of a century have laboured to effect. I am perfectly aware of the great difficulties that we have to encounter. I know the almost superhuman power of this combination. They have their hand almost upon the realm of England. Under the guise of Liberalism, under the pretence of legislating in the spirit of the age, they are, as they think, about to seize upon the supreme authority of the realm. But this I can say, that so long as, by the favour of the Queen, I stand here I will oppose to the utmost of my ability the attempt they are making. I believe the policy of the right hon. Gentleman who is their representative if successful will change the character of this country. It will deprive the subjects of Her Majesty of some of their most precious privileges, and it will dangerously touch even the tenure of the Crown.

THE IRISH CHURCH BILL.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MAY 22, 1868.

THE right hon. Gentleman who introduced the Second Reading of the Bill this evening seemed to complain very much that I should offer any opposition to his Motion; on the ground that the Ministry had not opposed the second and third Resolution, which he previously moved. We did not oppose those Resolutions, because, as I described them, we looked on them as corollaries of the first Resolution: and the right hon. Gentleman admitted the justice of that description. It does not follow that, when we oppose a policy, we are bound to oppose it on every stage. Common courtesy and common sense teach us that such a way of conducting public business would be utterly impracticable. We had taken on the Resolutions of the right hon. Gentleman two divisions in full houses, and, therefore, I only followed Parliamentary custom in announcing that though we objected to the second and third Resolutions as strongly as to the first, yet we should be content not to take any further division on them, expressing only our protest against them, but that we should reserve our Parliamentary right, when the Resolutions assumed the shape of a Bill, to express our dissent from the measure.

I apprehend that the course we took was not only convenient to the House, but consonant with common sense. To say that because we did not take further divisions on the second and third Resolutions we are therefore estopped from opposing the Bill is a proposition which every person, on reflection, will feel to be one that cannot be sustained. But the right hon. Gentleman, not content with maintaining that we are unreasonable in opposing the Bill, because we did not oppose, except by protest, the second and third Resolutions, says that we ought to support the Bill. The right hon. Gentleman said,—

"Not only am I astonished that you oppose the Bill, but I had every reason to believe that you would deem it your policy and an advantage to support it; because you have consented to the appointment of a committee to investigate the condition of the Irish Church, and as you yourselves admit the possibility of the committee proposing considerable modifications in the temporalities of the Irish Church, what could be more convenient than that in the meantime you should pass a Suspensory Bill which would prevent the creation of any new vested interest, which it would be very inconvenient for you to have to deal with by after legislation."

Well, Sir, I am perfectly willing so far to agree with the right hon. Gentleman, that if he will undertake in Committee to propose clauses providing that all the resources which may accrue from the suspended bishoprics and rectories should, when our ultimate legislation is decided upon, be apportioned and secured to the Established Church in Ireland, I will consider his proposition of supporting the present Bill with feelings very much inclined to accede to his request. But the right hon Gentleman forgets that he introduces to our notice a Bill which contains no provisions of that nature. He does not secure that the results of the suspension of these benefices will be apportioned hereafter to the benefit of that Establishment which we seek to uphold; but, on the contrary, he has to-night given a new

version of his policy, and, alarmed by an impression in the House that led to the proposal of a very awkward motion—namely, that he was prepared, when the results of suspending these benefices had accrued, to allot the sums thus acquired to the advantage of another Church—that is, the Roman Catholic Church—the right hon. Gentleman comes down to-night and tells us most distinctly that his policy is that none of the sequestered revenues of the Established Church in Ireland shall be apportioned to the maintenance of the religious institutions of any other creed whatever.

Well, what is the consequence? The right hon. Gentleman has come down to-night, to give us new expression of his policy, to propose that Church revenues—that funds which have been consecrated to religious purposes—shall in future be applied to secular uses. Therefore, the question has assumed quite a different aspect to-night. Sir, I am as much opposed to the new scheme of the right hon. Gentleman as to the one that he was accused of holding during the late debate, and which this evening he has repudiated. I am myself entirely opposed to applying any property which has been once devoted to spiritual purposes to what are called secular uses. I know of no instance in which appropriations of that kind have ever occurred in which they have not ended either in the advantage of some individual or of some family; or, if there has been some more plausible appropriation for a public purpose, it has been applied with the utmost wastefulness, and ultimately with complete misapplication. On these grounds, then, I vindicate my opposition to the Bill of the right hon. Gentleman, and I cannot agree to support it. But, Sir, these are the two main arguments that were brought forward by the right hon. Gentleman. The rest of the discussion, as far as his own observations and those of his principal supporters to-night

are concerned, has consisted in references to an extract from a passage in the speech of my noble friend the Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant. We have heard that speech referred to on every occasion on which this subject has been brought under the consideration of the House. Gentlemen opposite have a passage cut out of that speech, and I have observed it passed along as they speak in turn. Sometimes it is in the possession of a noble Lord, then it is in the possession of a right hon. Gentleman, and then it gets into the hands of a Gentleman with a humbler title. It is well-thumbed and well-worn, and now I am called upon to explain it.

In the first place, before I explain it, I wish to know what is the charge that is made against my noble Friend, because it has been expressed in such various terms—it has assumed on different nights such different forms, that before I reply I would like distinctly to ascertain what the precise charge is. We have had it to-night with candid precision from the right hon. and learned Member for Portarlington (Mr. Lawson), and I must do him the justice to say that he made the charge distinctly; and, as one who was the principal law adviser of the late Government, I take it for granted that he had well considered the terms, that he had made himself master of the case, that being a practised master of the forensic art he placed it before the House most favourably to the views and interests of his friends. I take it, therefore, from his showing, because the House must have observed that when the hon. Member for Bradford (Mr. Forster) and others have spoken on the subject they have made vague insinuations and innuendoes, calling upon me to explain expressions of my noble Friend without distinctly alleging them; but, while making a certain appearance of urging some odious charge, they have avoided

giving any distinct expression of what they meant. In this case that cannot be said, I am bound to admit, of the right hon. Gentleman the learned Member for Portarlington. What are his charges? He said that the Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant came down with an Irish policy, and that he proposed, in the first place, to endow a Roman Catholic University. Well, we have heard that charge before, and it has been contradicted. I myself have said over and over again that it never was proposed by us to endow a Roman Catholic University. ("Oh, oh.") What is the use of saying "Oh, oh!" now that the correspondence is on the table, and you can judge for yourselves whether there ever was such a proposition on our part? On the contrary, there was from others a proposition that a Roman Catholic University should receive an endowment, and that endowment was refused by us.

Well, so much for that distinct charge. What is the second charge? That the Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant proposed to pay the Roman Catholic clergy. I must say that I myself listened with great attention to my noble Friend the chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant, and I heard no proposition of the kind. I myself took part in the debate. I do not know whether I spoke the same night as my noble Friend, but if I did not I spoke the second night of the debate; and I said, then, most distinctly, that we, as a Government, entirely disapproved paying the Roman Catholic clergy; I stated our reasons for that disapproval, and expressed our opinion that the Roman Catholic clergy were sincere—certainly at present—in rejecting any proposition of the kind. Now, these are the two most considerable charges—the endowment of a Roman Catholic University and the payment of the Roman Catholic clergy. I say that we did not propose to endow a Roman Catholic

University, nor to pay the Roman Catholic clergy; and when I announced the policy of the Government in detail, I stated that as a Government we were averse to paying that clergy.

But then it has been strongly urged that my noble Friend used an expression of which I have never yet, either in the references to the speech of my noble Friend or the more general observations of hon. Gentlemen, obtained a distinct idea. The particular expression charged against my noble Friend—supposing him to have used it, though I do not believe he ever did—the supposed expression of my noble Friend, as referred to by the hon. Member for Bradford, was "religious equality." Now, that is a very vague phrase. What do you mean by religious equality? I myself, notwithstanding the observations which my noble Friend (Lord Elcho) has addressed to the House, am of opinion that we have religious equality in England; but I attach to the phrase a different meaning from that given to it by my noble Friend. I conceive that where a man has complete and perfect enjoyment of his religion, and can uphold and vindicate his religious privileges in the courts of Law, that state of things is religious equality. I admit that other persons may associate other ideas with the phrase religious equality; but because a Minister of State mentions the words "religious equality"—if he did mention them—are you to assume that he intends thereby to found on the part of the Government a political system composed of two parts—one the endowment of a Roman Catholic University, and the other the payment of the Roman Catholic clergy? To do so in the very teeth of the repeated statements made by myself in debate appears to me to be practising the arts of Parliamentary representation in a manner characterised by extraordinary dexterity.

Well, Sir, what is the third charge? My noble Friend is said to have announced another policy which he never did announce—namely, an increase of the *Regium Donum*. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department properly mentioned to-night that the *Regium Donum* had never been brought before the Cabinet. I think I can give as clear an account as was ever given to the House of what my noble Friend said on that subject. What my noble Friend said was, that in his opinion the *Regium Donum* was a miserable pittance. Well, I have myself, as some others in this House have done, received deputations on the subject of an increase in the *Regium Donum*: and I must say it requires a great command of countenance to describe the *Regium Donum* as a grant of great munificence. But I had always said, as my noble Friend said, that though I might not consider the *Regium Donum* as a grant of great munificence, it was utterly impossible in the present state of feeling, that we could propose an increase of the *Regium Donum*. This being the view, how could the *Regium Donum* be brought before the Cabinet had there not been a proposal to increase and reconstitute the *Regium Donum?* Such an idea had never occurred to us, whatever may be our opinions as to the amount of the *Regium Donum* and the manner in which it is administered; and I dare say many members of the Cabinet, and of the late Cabinet also, have not concealed their views upon that subject. Now, because my noble Friend considered and could not resist saying that it is a miserable pittance, it is immediately inferred that one of our propositions was to increase the *Regium Donum*. There is not the slightest foundation for the inference, nor is there the slightest inconsistency in the statements of my noble Friend and of the right hon. the Secretary of State. [An hon. Member:

"Levelling up."] Well, "levelling up" is a phrase which has often been used in this debate, very frequently, and which seems to be a very favourite one with hon. Gentlemen opposite. I should very much like to have their views as to the distinct meaning they attribute to the phrase "levelling up." That in a country like Ireland there may not be various modes by which you may raise the clergy of the different denominations in a manner more consonant to their feelings of self-respect than you could in a country like England, where the same circumstances do not prevail, no man would for a moment pretend to deny. You have been doing things year by year by which the *status* of the Roman Catholic clergymen in Ireland has been improved and recognised; and no doubt there are many things which might still be done—without violating the principles of our Constitution, and without inducing you to agree to revolutionary proceedings which may have the most injurious consequences upon the population of the country generally—to soften the spirit of society in Ireland and effect very beneficial results. And if my noble Friend expressed on that and other occasions his desire to support a policy of that kind, he only expressed a desire which is common to every Member of the Government.

Now, Sir, the hon. Member for Bradford has made a speech to-night about "Justice to Ireland." Starting with one or two convenient assumptions which no human being can prove or disprove, and to which no human being can ascribe any definite meaning, he, of course, rapidly arrives at conclusions on the strength of which he recommends the violent policy which it now is attempted to thrust upon the nation. "We must do justice to the Irish people," says the hon. Member for Bradford. Who are the Irish people?

The Irish people consist of several races and of several religions, and the hon. Member wants us to do something to satisfy a portion of the people who may be, and probably are, the majority. But it does not follow that because you do something which you assume may please the majority that you will not offend a very large and very powerful minority of the people, and in your accounts and your calculations as to the character and effect of your policy it is the most unwise thing in the world to disregard the feelings and the interests of powerful minorities. For what will be the consequence of disregarding the feelings and the interests of powerful minorities? Why, that your scheme of conciliation, your attempt to pacify a country and to establish what you call "Justice for the people" would probably end in your creating among other classes who are now satisfied and content the same discontent and dissatisfaction which you allege to prevail in that portion of the nation which you describe as, and which may be, the majority.

Now, Sir, I say there is not that similarity between the cases of Ireland and Scotland which the hon. Gentleman, as is common, assumes to exist. In the first place you must as wise and practical men deal with what exists. Here is a Church established for centuries in Ireland with a very powerful and numerous body in direct communion with it, and supported also by the sympathies of another numerous body, who, though not in direct communion with it, look upon it with respect and reverence. And you must remember that a mass of population like the Protestant population of Ireland never existed in Scotland as opposed to the Presbyterian form of worship. It never existed; and, therefore, there is no real similarity between the two countries. And even if there had been, we must remember that

what we have to deal with in Ireland exists at present, has been settled for a great number of years, and is now part of history, having settled itself by the force of circumstances, over which we ourselves have no control. We must as practical men consider the position of Ireland with reference to existing circumstances, and, therefore, when the hon. Gentleman the Member for Bradford comes forward and says the thing is perfectly simple, that all you have to do is to do justice to the people of Ireland, and to do in Ireland what was done in Scotland two centuries ago, and you will then find everything perfectly quiet and everybody perfectly content ("Hear, hear," from an hon. Member),—the hon. Gentleman opposite, who seems to think that everybody will be perfectly content, will probably not be responsible for the legislation which will arise, and, therefore, his mind need not be disturbed. But I say that the statesman who embarks in such a crusade, and who without the slightest regard to the feelings and interests of the great body of the Protestant population in Ireland, acts in complete disregard of those feelings and interests, but yet supposes that he is going to establish a system in Ireland which is to cure all evils and to satisfy all persons, is embarking in one of the wildest enterprises that ever the disordered imagination of man conceived.

But, Sir, notwithstanding what the hon. Member for Bradford says, I cannot refrain from considering this question with reference to the larger issue which is at stake, and any one who does consider it with a total disregard to consequences is not taking that sound view of the circumstances with which we have to deal, which the necessity of the case requires. I say this act is the first step to the disestablishment of the English Church. You may draw distinctions; you may say it applies only to Ireland; you may say that

the Church as established in Ireland is different from the Church as established in England; but you have not proved that. Sitting opposite to me are many gentlemen who on other occasions have proved just the reverse, and have alleged all the charges they have made against the Church in Ireland against the Church in England also. The most that could be urged by those who dissent from me on the other side of the House is that it is a difference in degree; but I say the principle involved is the connexion of a religious establishment with the State, and the question is whether you will have it or not. I have heard some comments made to-night upon observations I made early in the controversy. I made none that I regret, or did not make advisedly; and I do believe most solemnly, so far as the policy which is the consequence of the alleged crisis in Ireland is concerned, and can influence us, it is one that will bring about a crisis in England ("Oh!")—that is my opinion—and which, if pursued, will disturb the social system of this country to its very centre. I believe that this is an opinion very prevalent in the country, and that every day it grows stronger and wider among those classes who think and reflect, and who never act until they have thought and reflected.

An hon. Gentleman accused me of raising a "No Popery" cry. Allow me to say I have not heard that cry, but I have heard a cry raised in this country now that I never heard before, and that is the cry of "No Protestantism." ("Where?") I have heard it frequently, and read of it in various places. ("Where?") It is not for me to refer to expressions which are not used in this House; if I had heard them here, I should have noticed them before. That is the only cry I have heard connected with this matter, and it is one extremely novel in this country. I am not here to impress upon the House my

views of what the public feeling is upon this all-important question. I know nothing more idle than to go out of your way to give your own opinion as to the public sentiment of the day; that will and must declare itself, not from what we state in this House, but from the deep and earnest feelings of the people; and I only make use of these observations in answer to those who have alleged a view of the public sentiment of the country of a very different character. When I am told we have attempted to raise a cry, when I am told that the country disregards any appeal to it upon this all-important subject, when I am told that there is only one opinion in the country and that is in favour of the policy of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for South Lancashire, I am bound to assert that the result of my observation, information, and experience is of a totally different character. I do not wish to dwell upon that now, but I say that my experience and my conviction upon that subject are of a totally different character.

I believe in this country there is very great agitation upon this subject. I believe there is a strong feeling that the right hon. Gentleman has embarked in a most dangerous policy, that its consequences may be most serious to the country, that they may dim the splendour of the British Crown, and lower the character of the people of England. I believe that to be the opinion of the powerful classes in this country—*of* classes powerful not from station merely, but from the possession and exercise of virtues, and who never interfere in political affairs except from the strongest motives of public duty. If this be a right view, or even an approximately correct view, it is most unwise to disregard or affect to despise it. It is not by managed majorities—("Oh, oh!" and cheers)—it is not by such means that you can change the opinion of a country. I

do not say that we are right, I do not say that you are wrong. The observation I have made is a general and a true one. Whatever is the opinion of the people of England upon this great question—whether they will maintain the connexion between Church and State, and whether they believe that such a connexion is necessary for the happiness of the people and the security of the realm—whatever may be their opinion upon the subject—rest assured that that opinion will be asserted and will be triumphant.

THE IRISH CHURCH BILL.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MARCH 18, 1869.

SIR, when the right hon. Gentleman introduced the measure of which he has just now moved the second reading, he proclaimed that he was submitting to our notice a gigantic issue, and he went on to say that a greater and more profound question had never been brought under the consideration of Parliament. I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman in his own appreciation of his measure, and I deduce from such an admission on the part of the First Minister of the Crown this conclusion that if ever there were an instance which required on the part of this House its utmost judgment and deliberation, this is the case. I might add—not forgetting the peculiar character of many of the considerations involved in it—that it is one which also demands from both sides of the House much self-control and mutual forbearance.

It is more than two hundred years since gigantic issues were decided on by the House of Commons. They were decided then with an earnestness of conviction not inferior to that which I am sure pervades this Assembly now, but,

unfortunately, with a degree of passion and prejudice on both sides which turned out to be very detrimental to the country. The decision pronounced by the House of Commons at that time on gigantic issues was followed by a period of civil discord not more distinguished for its long duration than for the costly sacrifices which both sides in the contest had to endure. That period of civil war was followed by one of violent tranquillity—if I may so style it, —but one in which certainly the principles of civil and religious liberty did not flourish. At length the two parties, alike irritated and exhausted, terminated this great experimental chapter of our history with a passionate carelessness that recalled the old state of affairs without securing any of those objects for the attainment of which they had originally entered into the contest. Now, I cannot help feeling that what passed in the time of our predecessors may be profitable for us to remember; and that we may derive some instruction from it, and may resolve that, whatever may be the ultimate decision of Parliament on this gigantic issue, the country, which we fully represent, shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that we have arrived at the conclusion to which we may come in the light of reason, in the healthy atmosphere of instructed public opinion, with a deep sense of individual responsibility on the part of every Member of this House, and after the most vigilant and mature deliberation.

The right hon. Gentleman, in the measure which he has placed on the table, proposes to accomplish two objects. The first is, to sever the union between Church and State—which, for the convenience of debate, we call disestablishment. The second is to empower the State to seize the property of a corporation, which, for the convenience of debate, we call disendowment. Before I investigate the mode

by which the right hon. Gentleman seeks to accomplish these objects, or speculate upon what I think will be the consequences if those objects are accomplished, I would ask the House to allow me for one or two moments to make a few general observations upon disestablishment and disendowment. They are, to my mind, totally different matters, though they are frequently mixed up together, and the consequences of the one attributed to the other. In our debates last year—and, unfortunately, frequently upon the hustings—I observed the erroneous mode in which the consequences of disestablishment are attributed to disendowment, and in which the same process is followed *vice versâ*. Now it seems to me that it will tend to the satisfactory conduct of debate if there is some general understanding as to what we comprehend by those words, and if, on the whole, we can contrive in our discretion to attach the same meaning to the same expressions.

Now, Sir, with regard to disestablishment, I myself am much opposed to it, because I am in favour of what is called the union between Church and State. What I understand by the union of Church and State is an arrangement which renders the State religious by investing authority with the highest sanctions that can influence the sentiments, the convictions, and consequently the conduct of the subject; while, on the other hand, that union renders the Church—using that epithet in its noblest and purest sense—political; that is to say, it blends civil authority with ecclesiastical influence; it defines and defends the rights of the laity, and prevents the Church from subsiding into a sacerdotal corporation. If you divest the State of this connexion, it appears to me that you necessarily reduce both the quantity and the quality of its duties. The state will still be the protector of our persons and our property, and no doubt these

are most important duties for the State to perform. But there are duties in a community which rather excite a spirit of criticism than a sentiment of enthusiasm and veneration. All or most of the higher functions of Government—take education for example, the formation of the character of the people, and consequently the guidance of their future conduct—depart from the State, and become the appanage of religious societies, of the religious organizations of the country—you may call them the various Churches if you please—when they are established in what are called independent principles.

Now, the first question which necessarily arises in this altered state of affairs is—are we quite certain that in making this severance between political and religious influence we may not be establishing in a country a power greater than the acknowledged Government itself? I know this is a very philosophical age. I know there are many who consider that the religious influence is a waning influence, and that it is a mark of an enlightened statesman to divest the exercise of authority as much as possible of any connexion with religion. These are not my views. I do not believe that the influence of religion is a waning influence in public affairs. I have for a considerable time rather been of opinion that we are on the eve of a period when the influence of religion on public affairs may be predominant. It is very difficult in a popular assembly, as we all know, to touch upon subjects in which religion is concerned, and thirty years ago or so, when questions connected with religion were first constantly cropping up (if I may use the expression) in this House, it was curious and interesting to observe how both sides mutually agreed that, as it was necessary to legislate on these questions, Parliament should confine its attentions as much as possible to the mere technical details of the Bills before it,

avoiding any unnecessary reference to religious sentiment or principles.

All this, however, has entirely changed. The religious principle, its influence upon men, its material consequences in endowments, in ecclesiastical establishments, in sects and synods—how far it is necessary in the exercise of political power that it should to a certain degree be consecrated, and how far it is necessary for the enjoyment of religious liberty that the civil authority should exercise some control upon the religious organization of the country—these have now become not only political questions, but the greatest of political questions. It is impossible for us any longer to avoid that discussion. All we can do is to meet these questions fully and frankly, and, if possible, in a spirit of charity and of good temper, placing upon any expressions used on either side a favourable and friendly construction. I can only say that, if I make any of those "rhetorical mishaps" which are necessarily incident to our free habit of discussion in this House, I am sure no gentleman opposite or on my side of the House will suppose for a moment that I wish to wound his feelings or offend his conscience.

When we have to decide whether we can dissociate the principle of religion from the State, it is well to remember that we are asked to relinquish an influence that is universal. We hear in these days a great deal of philosophy. Now it is my happiness in life to be acquainted with eminent philosophers. They all agree in one thing. They will all tell you that, however brilliant may be the discoveries of physical science, however marvellous those demonstrations which attempt to penetrate the mysteries of the human mind, wonderful as may be these discoveries, greatly as they have contributed to the comfort and convenience of man, or confirmed his consciousness of the nobility of his nature—yet

all those great philosophers agree in one thing—that in their investigations there is an inevitable term where they meet the insoluble, where all the most transcendent powers of intellect dissipate and disappear. There commences the religious principle. It is universal, and it will assert its universal influence in the government of men.

Now, I put this case before the House. We are asked to commence a great change, for it is impossible to consider the effect of this measure merely with the limited, though important, bearing which is on the face of it. The right hon. Gentleman has himself given a frank and fair warning to Parliament. He has told them he was going to call for their decision upon a gigantic issue. He has himself admitted that a greater or more profound question was never submitted to Parliament. When, therefore, we are called to the consideration of these circumstances, it is absolutely necessary that we should contemplate the possibility of our establishing a society in which there may be two powers, the political and the religious, and the religious may be the stronger. Now, I will take this case. Under ordinary circumstances, a Government performing those duties of police to which it will be limited when the system has perfectly developed, the first step to which we are called upon to take to-night—such a Government under ordinary circumstances will be treated with decent respect. But a great public question such as has before occurred in this country, and as must periodically occur in free and active communities—a great public question arises which touches the very fundamental principles of our domestic tranquillity, or even the existence of the Empire; but the Government of the country, and the religious organizations of the country, take different views and entertain different opinions upon that subject. In all probability the Government of the country

will be right. The Government, in its secret councils, is calm and impartial, is in possession of ample and accurate information, views every issue before it in reference to the interests of all classes, and takes, therefore, what is popularly called a comprehensive view. The religious organization of the country acts in quite a different manner. It is not calm; it is not impartial; it is sincere, it is fervid, it is enthusiastic. Its information is limited and prejudiced. It does not view the question of the day in reference to the interests of all classes. It looks upon the question as something of so much importance—as something of such transcendent interest, not only for the earthly, but even for the future welfare of all Her Majesty's subjects—that it will allow no consideration to divert its mind and energy from the accomplishment of its object. It, therefore, necessarily takes what is commonly called a contracted view. But who can doubt what will be the result when, on a question which enlists and excites all the religious passions of the nation, the zeal of enthusiasm advocates one policy, and the calmness of philosophers and the experience of statesmen recommend another? The Government might be right, but the Government would not be able to enforce its policy, and the question might be decided in a way that might disturb a country or even destroy an empire.

I know, Sir, it may be said that though there may be some truth in this view abstractedly considered, yet it does not apply to the country in which we live, because this is a country in which we enjoy religious freedom and in which toleration is established, and because only a portion of Her Majesty's subjects are in communion with the National Church. I draw a very different conclusion to that which I have supposed—and I believe fairly supposed—as the objection made to the argument I am now offering. It is because there is an Established Church that we have achieved re-

ligious liberty and enjoy religious toleration; and without the union of the Church with the State I do not see what security there would be either for religious liberty or toleration. No error could be greater than to suppose that the advantage of the Established Church is limited to those who are in communion with it. Take the case of the Roman Catholic priest. He will refuse—and in doing so he is quite justified, and is, indeed, bound to do so—he will, I say, refuse to perform the offices of the Church to any one not in communion with it. The same with the Dissenters. It is quite possible—it has happened, and might happen very frequently—that a Roman Catholic may be excommunicated by his Church, or a sectarian may be denounced and expelled by his congregation; but if that happens in this country, the individual in question who has been thus excommunicated, denounced or expelled, is not a forlorn being. There is the Church, of which the Sovereign is the head, which does not acknowledge the principle of dissent, and which does not refuse to that individual those religious rites which are his privilege and consolation. I therefore hold that the connexion between Church and State is really a guarantee for religious liberty and toleration, that it maintains, as it were, the standard of religious liberty and toleration just as much as we by other means sustain the standard of value. If you wish to break up a State, and destroy and disturb a country, you can never adopt a more effectual method for the purpose than by destroying at the same time the standards of value and toleration.

Now, I would wish to make one or two observations on this question of disendowment. I consider that if the State seizes the property of a corporation without alleging any cause, it is spoliation. But if the State alleges some penal cause for its violence, though it may be an unfounded, tyran-

nical, and oppressive one, then I understand the act of the State to be confiscation. I make that distinction between the two processes, and I think the House will find that there is something in it. I am not about to uphold the doctrine that there is no difference between corporate and private property. I acknowledge the difference fully and frankly. The State has relations with all property; but the relations of the State with private and with corporate property are of a different character. I would attempt to express them thus. The relations of the State to private property are the relations of a guardian. The relations of the State to corporate property are those of a trustee. The duty of a guardian to his ward is mainly to protect his ward. The duties of a trustee are of a more complicated character. Undoubtedly his first duty is to see that the intentions of the founder are fulfilled, as far as the varying circumstances of generations will permit. I will make the admission, for I wish to argue the case fairly, that unquestionably, if he finds that the resources at his command are extravagantly beyond what are necessary for the object in view, or that the purpose of the trust is pernicious, it is his duty to consider by what means a redistribution of those funds and of that property may be safely accomplished. But this I do lay down as a principle which I will maintain against all comers, that under no circumstances whatever ought a trustee to appropriate to himself property of which he is the fiduciary. If that were permitted there would be no security whatever for property of any description. A Minister might throw his eye upon any wealthy corporation and say, "I will confiscate this property and apply it to the partial discharge of the National Debt, or to the entire discharge of the Floating Debt;" or he might say, "Taxation is never very popular; the taxation of this country which I rule is on the whole founded on just principles; but there are great murmurs not only against taxes but also rates;

I will confiscate the property of this corporation, and I shall consequently be enabled sensibly to relieve the country, and thus, of course, obtain a great increase of power and popularity." But if that course were pursued, I am certain that the tenure of no property would be safe, and the credit of the country must collapse.

Having made these observations with respect to private and corporate property, I would now ask permission to state the grounds why I am, on the whole, entirely opposed to confiscating the property of corporations; why I view it alike with dislike and suspicion. The reason, Sir, is that in the first place, whatever may have been the origin of corporate property—whether the gift of the nation, which was rarely the case, or the donation of individuals, as was generally its source—one thing is clear, that it is, from its use and purpose, essentially popular property—the property of the nation, though not of the State. The second reason why I dislike all confiscation of corporate property is, that I find that no great act of confiscation was ever carried into effect without injurious consequences to the State in which it took place. Either—generally speaking—it has led to civil war or established, what in the long run is worse, a chronic disaffection for ages among the subjects of the Crown. But if there be any corporate property the confiscation of which I most dislike, it is Church property, and for these reasons,—Church property is to a certain degree an intellectual tenure; in a greater degree, a moral and spiritual tenure. It is the fluctuating patrimony of the great body of the people. It is, I will not say the only, but—even with our most developed civilization—it is the easiest method by which the sons of the middle and even of the working classes can become landed proprietors, and what is more, can become resident landed proprietors, and fulfil all the elevating duties incident

to the position. But there is another reason why I am greatly opposed to the confiscation of Church property, and that is because I invariably observe that when Church property is confiscated, it is always given to the landed proprietors.

Sir, I hope that in this House I shall not be accused of being opposed to the interests of those connected with the land of this country. I look upon the land tenure of this country as, on the whole, one of the most beneficial and most successful institutions that has been created out of the feudal system. It is a tenure that by dispersing over the soil a number of residents deeply interested in it, has secured local Government, which is the best safeguard of political liberty, and, on the other hand, it is a tenure which, while it has attained for us these great social and political advantages, has been consistent with making the soil of this country, on the whole, the most productive in the world—that is to say, not only in the Old World but in the New World you cannot find a tract of land of equal size with that of the United Kingdom which is so generally and so uniformly productive. Therefore, I think I am justified in saying that it is a tenure which, both on account of its social and political advantages, and the great material consequences it has secured to the country, may be truly described as one of the most advantageous. I have not the slightest objection myself to the landed proprietors of the country increasing their wealth and increasing their power so long as they do it by legitimate means—by the improvement of their estates, or in the fulfilment of those duties which the Constitution of their country generously, but wisely, has assigned to them.

Sir, we know very well that the landed interest of this country will have their position examined and challenged as every institution and class in this age will be; yet I believe

that, for the reasons I have indicated, they will give a triumphant answer, and issue from that scrutiny with the approbation and sympathy of the great body of their countrymen. But I am sure of this, they cannot, especially in this age, and in the circumstances under which we live, take a more short-sighted course to increase their property and their influence than to have any hand in sacrilegious spoliation.

Now, Sir, having made these remarks on disestablishment and disendowment, I would ask the House to examine the mode in which the right hon. Gentleman intends to put this process into practice in Ireland; and to consider, the while, what may be the probable consequence of the course which he recommends. The Government of Ireland is not a strong one; its sanctions are less valid than those of the Government of England. It has not the historic basis which England has. It has not the tradition which the English Government rests upon. It does not depend upon that vast accumulation of manners and customs which in England are really more powerful than laws and statutes. The Government of Ireland is only comparatively strong from its connexion with England; and the reason the Government of Ireland is a weak government is that a considerable portion of the inhabitants of Ireland are disorderly and discontented.

Now, I will not go at this part of my observations into an investigation of the causes, alleged or real, of Irish discontent. They are like Martial's Epigrams, some are just, some unjust, some are well-founded, some fantastical, some are true, some false. But no one will deny that discontent exists; and I think no man will deny this also—I am speaking to both sides of the House, with candour to all parties—no one will deny that among the causes—I do

not say the only or the chief, but I say all will agree that among the causes of Irish discontent is this, that a powerful clergy, exercising their influence over numerous congregations, have no connexion with the State. Well, what is the policy of the right hon. Gentleman? "Ireland is discontented—one of the causes of its discontent is that a Church is not connected with the State; I will regenerate the country, and I will have three Churches not connected with the State." What must be the consequences of such a policy?

There is another point to which I would draw attention. Whatever be the sanguine expectations of hon. Gentlemen opposite as to the consequences of this measure if we pass it, I think they will agree that of itself it is not sufficient to terminate discontent in Ireland. There are other measures of equal importance, or even much greater importance, that are already mentioned in political circles of authority. Even the Prime Minister has not only acknowledged that the question of the land of Ireland is one of immense importance that must be attended to, but he has, I believe, pledged himself to take it in hand; at any rate, some of his colleagues, before they were his colleagues, have left in memorable and burning sentences, what they consider the best plan for at least the partial remedy of this deep-rooted grievance of Ireland. I am, therefore, right in saying that when this measure is passed, if it do pass, we must still be prepared to encounter Irish discontent. That is a conclusion in which all sides agree. Well, now, Sir, have we a better chance of encountering Irish discontent when three Churches are disconnected with the State than when we have only one? How will it probably work? There will be great discontent in Ireland, and whenever there is great discontent in Ireland, the Church that is not connected with

the State always supplies a body of learned, disciplined, and eloquent men who are the exponents of that discontent. Well, you will then have discontent in Ireland, and you will have three bodies of learned, organised, and eloquent men who will only be doing their duty to their congregations by being the exponents of this great disaffection.

It is not a wild assumption on my part if I were to suppose that with the cause of the next great Irish discontent the land may be in some degree connected; and what will be the necessary and natural feelings of the three Churches on the land question? Sir, I do not as some do—I do not myself contemplate the immediate cessation of all dogmatic differences between the three Churches. I am in hopes that year after year any asperity of this kind arising from such a source may be softened; but I think I may venture to say this—that there will be one dogma in which the three Churches will entirely agree; which will be as unanimously adopted as any that may be sanctioned by any impending Œcumenical Council; and that dogma will be this—that the clergy of the three Churches, whether they were disendowed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth or in the reign of Queen Victoria, have all been equally ill-treated. And where there is this general discontent upon the land question they will naturally say—"We entirely agree with the feeling of the nation, the land question is a question that must be settled." They will say,—"The people have lost the great estate which belonged to the Church as their trustees, and where it is neither the clergy who were disendowed in the reign of Elizabeth nor the clergy disendowed in the reign of Queen Victoria will be able to tell you." Therefore, I have not the slightest doubt myself that the general discontent prevailing from the city of the Tribes to the capital of the linen manufacture, will find learned,

earnest, and eloquent exponents of the wrongs of the country without any reference to differences in religious creed. The land question will assume many forms with one purpose. The multiplied demand will be irresistible unless we meet it with an alternative, and what that alternative is I will notice subsequently. Such, Sir, in my mind, are the probable—I will not say immediate—consequences; but consequences that will occur in the early experience of many men who sit in this House of the policy of disestablishment in Ireland, as it is advised by the right hon. Gentleman the First Minister. And, Sir, such are the prospects which disestablishment affords us of rendering a people contented and a Government strong.

Well now, Sir, disestablishment offering a prospect of so ambiguous and so unpromising a character, let us see how the right hon. Gentleman intends to act in regard to disendowment. The right hon. Gentleman proposes to deprive the Protestant Church in Ireland of its property. The natural question that immediately arises is—Why? Does anybody claim the property? Nobody claims it. Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that any other Church would use the property with more advantage? Certainly not, for he does not propose to give it to any other church. Is the tenure of the property of the Church unsatisfactory and feeble? Quite the reverse. On the contrary, it is the strongest tenure in the country, and it does not merely depend on the Act of Settlement, as the estates of most gentlemen do, because it has a prescription of three centuries. One is naturally and necessarily anxious to know under these circumstances—when no one asks for the property, when the right hon. Gentleman does not pretend that any other Church would carry out the intentions of the founders better than the Protestant Church, and when he does not

deny that the tenure of the Protestant Church is a complete and powerful tenure—why he deprives it of its property? That, I submit, is a natural question to ask, and it is one on which we ought to have a satisfactory answer.

So far as I could collect from the right hon. Gentleman's speech, to which I listened with unbroken interest and attention, the reason why he deprives the Protestant Church in Ireland of its property is that the feelings of the Roman Catholics in Ireland are hurt by the Protestants having endowments, although the Roman Catholic Church wishes to depend on voluntary contributions, and although they are clearly of opinion that, because the Protestant Church is endowed, that is the reason why the Protestant Church in Ireland is a comparative failure. I must say that this is the most extraordinary reason that has ever yet been adduced by a Minister for a great act of confiscation, and it becomes the House well and narrowly to consider it. It is an entirely new principle to take away the property of one corporation because there is another body—to which he does not propose to give it—jealous of that corporation having the property. This, let me remind the House, is not only a new principle, but a new principle which may be applied to all kinds of property, and for this reason, because it has no peculiar reference to corporate property. It does not touch any of the attributes of corporate property, whether good or evil. The right hon. Gentleman, as the representative of the State, which is the great trustee in this matter, confesses that the property of the Protestant Church in Ireland is not greater than its needs. He confesses that the provisions for the management of that property are not only good, but excellent and admirable. The right hon. Gentleman does not for a moment pretend that he has any other body in his eye that can carry out the intention of the origi-

nal founder or donor better than the body whose property he is going to confiscate. It is not in his character as a fiduciary, or with reference to corporate property particularly, that this rule is laid down. It is a new principle that may be applied to private property to-morrow. It is the principle of forfeiture without a pretext. So far I ought, indeed, to correct myself. It is a new principle since we have had a settled Constitution, and since we came to live under the laws of progressive civilization. Otherwise it is an old principle enough, because it is the principle of tyranny and oppression in the darkest ages.

But now see in what inscrutable mischief we may be landed if this principle is sanctioned. It cannot be confined to corporate property, because it has no affinity to corporate property. Apply it to private property. We are so used to plundering churches that the moment a corporation is known to be in possession of a large property an hon. Member gives notice of his intention to bring the subject before the House. The fact is that our eyes are shut to the enormity of the circumstances when they are tested by objects with which we are daily familiar. Therefore, let us try this principle, which is an open principle, and not peculiar to corporations, and apply it to private property. I will ask the attention of the House to this part of the subject. In Ireland there are many estates—many large and many rich estates, and they belong, most of them, to Irish gentlemen. There are also many Irish gentlemen in Ireland, amiable and accomplished men, the most agreeable companions in the world, but who have not large estates, and some of whom have no estates at all. After the announcement by the right hon. Gentleman of this startling principle of sheer forfeiture without the application to the property of any other machinery to carry out the intentions of the

founders—after the proclamation by the right hon. Gentleman of this astounding principle—what will be the natural course of an Irish gentleman in the position I have described? (A laugh.) His argument would be this—it is a very serious matter for hon. members, and it is only by proceeding in this way that you can discover the validity of the principle—his argument would be this—the Irish gentleman in the unfortunate position which just now excited the laughter of the House would attend upon the Minister and say this, "We find ourselves in an anomalous position. Our breeding is not inferior to that of our habitual companions. Our education is the same. Our pursuits are similar. We meet in the same hunting field. We drink the same claret. We stand opposite to each other in the same dance. And our feelings are hurt by some of our companions having estates of £6,000, or £8,000 or £10,000 a year, with broad acres and extensive woods. We know well the spirit of the age, that the sentiment of selfishness is not to be tolerated. We do not ask for the estates of our more fortunate companions. All we ask is that you will take their estates away from them and establish, as one of the great principles of Irish regeneration, social equality; and let all Irish gentlemen, like the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, live upon voluntary contributions." And yet this is the great principle which I am told several hon. Gentlemen opposite have pledged themselves to support, and that without even being acquainted with it.

I do not wish to press the case; I believe the parallel to be a sound one, and I am sure that great changes in the relations of property must follow from the success of the right hon. Gentleman's propositions. Still it may be said there is a distinction between corporate and private property, and

therefore you press the case too much in the instance you have given. I do not think so. I have well considered the principle which the right hon. Gentleman has brought forward. I believe it is not peculiar to corporate property, and that gentlemen who have private property will do well to consider whether it does not touch their case. But I am willing to apply it to corporate property. I speak in the capital of an ancient nation, remarkable above all the nations of the world for its rich endowments. Charity, in its most gracious, most learned, and most humane form, has established institutions in this country to soften the asperities of existence. There are three great hospitals alone in this city endowed with estates which would permit them to rank with some of the wealthiest of our peers. Their united revenues alone considerably exceed £100,000. The House knows well these great establishments—St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas's, and Guy's. But there are other hospitals in the country, where the physicians are not less celebrated, the surgeons not less skilful, the staff not less devoted, and which give all their energies, thought, learning, and life to mitigate the sufferings of humanity. Well, I say, would it not, according to the new views and the new principle, be as painful as the existence of an Endowed Protestant Church is to the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Ireland, for these eminent physicians and surgeons and their devoted staff to feel that their greatest efforts were often unable to accomplish all that they desired, and that their position as a voluntary body sometimes entailed upon them humiliation. Why should not the Minister come forward in a like spirit with that which now seems to inspire all his policy, and concede to these gentlemen that the painful anomaly should be terminated, and that St. George's Hospital, Middlesex Hospital, University College Hospital, and,

perhaps Westminster Hospital, all depending upon voluntary contributions, should be placed on a footing of equality with those great institutions which by their endowments imparted to those connected with them a factitious importance in the profession, by the process of depriving these latter of their estates? Well, there might, no doubt, a good deal be said in favour of that view. The Minister would have £120,000 a year to dispose of, and he could in the handsomest manner give it to the farmers of England towards the reduction of the county rates. And I ask you seriously, if you are to adopt these principles for Ireland, is it possible that you should not apply them also to England? As I proceed with my comments on this Bill we shall have some further opportunity of considering this question. There still are English Members with some influence in this House, and I hope they will consider on both sides of the House the position in which they will be placed with reference to this question. They are asked to make ducks and drakes of millions in Ireland, to assist persons who have only to meet the same duties and difficulties experienced in this country.

And now let us see how the right hon. Gentleman proposes to apply the power which you are going to concede to him of depriving the Church of Ireland of its property, and that on no plea whatever. Now, it is a very curious part of the measure to which I am about to call attention. Disendowment in itself is not a complicated transaction. If a Government is strong, if a prince has the power, it is remarkable with what facility he can disendow his subjects of all their possessions; and so a Minister, if he has a majority in Parliament, may disendow any corporation tomorrow. But when you have disendowed, if you have any regard not merely for principles of law, but also for the principles of a high policy, you offer some scheme in re-

turn by which the original intentions of the endowers may be fulfilled. In performing an office of that kind the difficulties of a Minister would not be great. For instance, there is the disendowment of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, which is often referred to in discussions and in speeches having reference to the policy of the right hon. Gentleman. There the course was very simple. The Government of that day determined to take away the property from the Episcopal Church of Scotland, and to give it to another body. A very short Act of Parliament did the business—it will be found among the Scotch Acts and is probably in the library. By this it was declared that the property hitherto enjoyed by the Episcopal body, its manses, and churches, and tithes, should in future belong to, and that the duties should be performed by, the Presbyterian body, and the Act created a roving commission to carry that piece of legislation into effect. In those days no great difficulty was experienced in such a transfer.

But that is not the position of the right hon. Gentleman. The right hon. Gentleman, stepping out of his duties as the great fiduciary of the State, has made up his mind to confiscate the property of the Irish Protestant Church, but he has not made up his mind to give that property to any other body that could fulfil the intention of the original foundation. And therefore this has occurred to the measure of the right hon. Gentleman—one of the most remarkable results ever brought about by a Minister. Coming forward entirely to plunder the Irish Protestant Church, he finds that the only way in which he can accomplish his purpose is to ask the Irish Protestant Church to co-operate with him. This is the most notable part of this extraordinary measure. If the Irish Protestant Church does not co-operate with the right hon. Gentleman to carry out his policy he will be placed in

a most difficult position. By his Bill he has confiscated the whole property of the Church; he will have on his hands some morning 1,500 churches, an immense number of glebe-houses, property without end, and a very complicated trust to fulfil. Plainly, therefore, the Irish Protestant Church, if his plan is to succeed, must co-operate with him in carrying into effect all the details of his policy. I do not deny that the right hon. Gentleman may have a purpose so patriotic that it might so strike the Irish Protestant church that it was desirable for them to sympathize with his appeal and say:—"The blow, no doubt, is very great; but still, if it be, as you say, absolutely necessary for the tranquillity of the country, for the advancement of good government, and for the general welfare of Her Majesty and her dominions that we should bear this legislation, we will endeavour to do so." I can conceive a Minister making such an appeal, and I can conceive a great body answering in such a spirit, because I give Ministers and corporate bodies credit—which some people do not—for patriotic and enlightened feeling. But a Minister appealing to such a body under such circumstances would at least make the appeal in a most conciliatory manner, and would frame his propositions in a way calculated to soothe their feelings, and, as far as circumstances would admit, to respect their interests.

Now, how does the right hon. Gentleman act, and what are the terms which he offers to the Irish Protestant Church to induce them to co-operate with him to consummate his confiscation? As inducements, he makes them four propositions. The first is that the vested interests of every individual shall be respected. Well, I say that goes for nothing. There is no combination of circumstances under which at this moment any Prime Minister, in this country, proposing a confiscation of property could hope to carry this

without at the same time accompanying it with security for vested interests. It would outrage the feelings of Parliament and the conscience of the country by adopting any other course. Respect for vested interests are the common-places of confiscation. I therefore pass them by.

We come to the next proposition. The right hon. Gentleman offers to the Church of Ireland, by a means to which I shall afterwards refer, and which I need not dwell upon now—he offers to those whom he is about to plunder—the possession of their churches, on condition that they undertake to keep them in repair. At least I understood from the right hon. Gentleman that such was the case. There is a variance sometimes between the Bill and the right hon. Gentleman's statement, as often occurs in these matters, and some confusion may therefore arise in attributing to the Bill what was in his speech. But I believe I am correct in saying that, according to the speech, they are to have possession of the churches.

Mr. GLADSTONE.—On a declaration of their intention to keep them in repair.

Mr. DISRAELI.—Yes, but what is a declaration of intention? I really do not know. It may be a deed sealed, signed, and delivered, and may involve engagements of the highest character and consequences. However, I do not want to split words with the right hon. Gentleman. There is no doubt about this—the Irish Church are offered the possession of their churches on condition of making a declaration of their intention to maintain them. But is that any great concession? By this policy the right hon. Gentleman will find himself one fine morning in possession of 1,500 churches at least. Somebody must keep them in repair. Even the Liberation Society would not tolerate that the churches should be allowed to tumble down. "You must

keep the fabrics in order," they would say, "or you must raze them to the ground. We must not allow such a scandal through Christendom as that one of the kingdoms of Her Majesty is covered with sacred edifices tumbling to pieces, and that the aspect of regenerated Ireland is that of a general ruin." I say then, that the right hon. Gentleman, who will have these 1,500 churches to keep up, ought to be, as a prudent man, very glad if he can find any persons who would take a certain quantity off his hands. I can hardly believe that among his inducements to the Irish Church to co-operate with him in accomplishing this total confiscation the offer of their churches is—I will not use a coarse word—an inducement of a paramount character. And therefore I think we can hardly look upon it as a consideration valid enough to secure this extraordinary aid and union.

There is a third offer; and here, again, there is a great difference between the statement and the Bill. I am sincerely anxious not to misrepresent anything, and I shall state what I believe to be the true proposal. The Irish Church, or those who will represent it, are, as I understand, to retain the glebe-houses, provided they discharge the debt upon them, which is so great as to make these houses unmarketable. Well, that proposition does not appear to me to be invested with those glowing colours which ought to induce the archbishops, bishops, deans and clergy of Ireland to co-operate with the right hon. Gentleman in what I shall show you is a scheme of entire and complete confiscation.

Then there is a fourth proposition, respecting which it appears to me that there is a very considerable misconception, and that is the appointment of a Commission for the benefit of those Gentlemen who are possessed of vested interests. The object of that Commission, we are told, is to enable the clergy to capitalize their vested interests, which will then be-

come the trust property of a certain body, to which I shall afterwards have to advert. It is estimated that the interests thus capitalized would be certainly not less than £6,000,000 —some say it would be much more; but that includes two small items which, strictly speaking, are not vested interests, and therefore I will not dwell upon them. But I suppose there is no doubt that the capitalization of those vested interests, if all the incumbents would agree to capitalize them, would produce a sum of £6,000,000, and a great many people are under the impression that the Irish Protestant Church would thus be left with an endowment of £6,000,000. Sir, that is a great misconception. I do not mean to say it is a misconception of the right hon. Gentleman; far from that. It is a misconception which people who do not trouble themselves with details, and are captivated with fine statements, lightly run away with. But the fact is, it is a delusion.

Now, in the first place, is it the interest of the incumbents to capitalize their vested interests? These vested interests will be secure, if anything can be secure in these days of spoliation. They will be secure by the engagements of the Government, and they ought to be paid with the punctuality and the precision of the dividends. Why, therefore, should the person who possesses and enjoys a vested interest come and exchange it for a security of less value?—because the security of an unknown body cannot be equal to the security of the Government.

But there is another reason why I doubt whether the possessors of vested interests will be apt to capitalize them, because, even if they considered the security of this new body were equal to that of the Government, or, from an *esprit de corps* were willing to accept an inferior security, must they not feel that they have no security whatever that

these £6,000,000 put into the hands of this unknown body may not be confiscated? No one can suppose, after such a rude shock to public credit and to national feeling as the confiscation of any corporation in Ireland must produce, no one can suppose that the 2,200 incumbents and bishops would come and at once make a new fund, which, after all, is tainted by having originated from the old confiscated fund, and which in a moment of political passion may be considered to have retained all its odious characteristics, and therefore to be worthy of confiscation.

Having, therefore, given some reasons why incumbents will not capitalize their vested interests, I want it to be clearly understood that, even if their vested interests are capitalized, no permanent endowment can grow from that capitalization. That appears to me to be perfectly clear. It is a point of the utmost importance, and I mention it now that it may be well discussed in Committee. I do not see how any permanent endowment can accrue. As the body to which I shall have afterwards to refer is in the position of an insurance company—if it gain on one life it may lose on another; but on the average there are 2,000 clergymen, and when all their lives have terminated, and all the vested interests come to an end, it will be found that the debtor and creditor account will be pretty nearly balanced. Therefore, I cannot believe that those who are possessed of vested interests will take advantage of this proposition, and if they do, I want to impress on the House—for there are many hon. Gentlemen on the Liberal side who do not wish for confiscation—I want to impress on the House that no permanent endowment can accrue from the scheme. That is the main conclusion which ought to be borne in mind, and which I trust will be borne in mind in this debate. Now, Sir, I have shown the House that the right hon. Gentleman is in an extraordinary position,

and it will require all his genius to get him out of it. He comes forward as a great confiscator, and then he finds that he cannot accomplish the act of spoliation without the cordial co-operation of those whom he is going to rob. It did require the fervent spirit of the First Minister of the Crown to have devised such a scheme, and, whatever the result, I think its ingenuity is really an honour to the British Parliament. I have shown that, having devised the scheme, he has offered four inducements to the Irish Protestant Church to co-operate with him, and I have also shown that the four inducements are utterly futile. For the sake of time, I will not recapitulate what they are, because I am quite sure they must be in the mind and memory of every hon. Member. Well, but is there anything else in the Bill, which might justify the Irish Church, however disappointed, in this act of supernatural patriotism? The manner in which the Roman Catholic Church is treated in this Bill as regards the College of Maynooth—is that an inducement to the Irish Protestant Church to co-operate in its own spoliation?

Now, in making my comments upon Maynooth I am anxious not to be misunderstood. If this measure is to be carried, or any measure of the kind, I cannot consider the case of Maynooth with any prejudices arising from the objects for which the endowment was made. I only view the case of Maynooth as I view that of any person disturbed and distressed by a Bill of this kind. If the safety of the State does require measures of this kind, I say that the interests you deal with should be dealt with justly, and in the highest sense liberally. That is the principle I would lay down, and I could make no exception of course of Maynooth. Therefore, if I make any comment as to the arrangements proposed with regard to Maynooth, it is not because Maynooth is concerned that I make them, but because there is ex-

ceptional treatment in this as in other instances, and because it does not appear to me that equal justice is meted out.

I will not touch upon the point upon which an hon. Baronet (Sir George Jenkinson) addressed a question to the right hon. Gentleman this evening. I think the hon. Baronet was quite entitled to put that question, because I know that men of the highest authority think that part of the scheme founded on principles of the most ambiguous nature. I willingly accept the explanation of the right hon. Gentleman, although it was an explanation which, as far as justice was concerned, was not altogether satisfactory. But I do not dwell upon that. I apprehend that, when we come to consider this question, the life interests, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, ought to be estimated and appraised on the same principles. But, Sir, in the arrangement with respect to Maynooth—and that arrangement is one of those which are to induce the Irish Protestant Church to co-operate with Ministers—there are circumstances which appear to me to be of an invidious character. Now, we shall assume for a moment that the same number of years are taken in calculating vested interests, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. But in the case of Maynooth the vested interests, on no pretence whatever, could be estimated at fourteen, or even seven years' purchase. You have applied to all the students of the college, so far as I can understand the scheme of the Government, the same principles which, according to the version given by the right hon. Gentleman this evening, are applied to those who enjoy vested interests in the Protestant Church. Now, Sir, that is not just. The position of a student or scholar at Maynooth is not analogous in any degree to that of an incumbent of the Protestant Church.

The right. hon. Gentleman talked of the vested interests of the professors. No one grudges the vested interests

of the professors. They are entitled to the full and liberal appreciation of their vested interests; but we have the best evidence of what the amount of the vested interests of the professors is. I was in the House when Sir Robert Peel brought forward the Maynooth Endowment, and I remember the particular impression that was made on the House as he proceeded, but not in detail, to propose the amount of salaries to be given to the chief officers of Maynooth. For reasons which are obvious he said that he should propose for that purpose an endowment of £6,000 a-year. Now, therefore, we know that the vested interests of the professors, on which the right hon. Gentleman enlarged, must be calculated on the basis of an endowment of £6,000 a year, and with those figures I confess I never could arrive at the results to which the right hon. Gentleman has come. Now, Sir, are there any other reasons with regard to Maynooth which should also make the Irish Protestant Church refrain from accepting the proposition of the right hon. Gentleman? I think that such reasons may be found in the source from which the right hon. Gentleman has acknowledged, not only in his speech, but in his Bill, that the compensation for the College of Maynooth is to be derived.

This appears to me to be a subject of great seriousness, and one on which the right hon. Gentleman owes an explanation to the House. If there was anything which we understood from the debates of last Session, and from the speeches of last autumn—if there was anything which was more clearly understood than another from the fervid declarations made on the impassioned hustings of Lancashire, it was this, that although the Protestant Church of Ireland was to be plundered, none of its property was to be given to the ministers of any other religion, and none of its property was

to be applied to imperial purposes. There were the reiterated pledges given to the country; and upon the understanding of those and of similar declarations, no doubt, the vote of the country was taken.

Well, Sir, are those pledges redeemed by the measure before us? Is that double engagement of the Prime Minister fulfilled? I put it to the candour of both sides of the House. I have referred to the debates of the last Session of Parliament, and to the declarations made from the hustings of Lancashire last autumn; but, Sir, I need not have revived any painful memories, I might have appealed to the preamble of the right hon. Gentleman's own Bill. In the preamble it is said that it is expedient to do several things—that the Irish Church should cease to be established by law, that the proceeds of the property of the said Church, after satisfying all just and equitable claims, should be held and applied for the advantage of the Irish people, but not for the maintenance of any Church, or of the clergy of any other communion, nor for "the teaching of religion." Why, Sir, that is the preamble of the Bill. One would have supposed that the arrangement was made after the Bill had been drawn, and that by some inadvertence—nobody attends to a preamble—the original preamble was allowed to remain. It must be the preamble of the first Cabinet Council— it cannot be that of the last.

But how stands the case as regards the fulfilment of the pledges that all the property of the Irish Protestant Church should be devoted to Irish, and not to Imperial purposes? Maynooth is supported at this moment by the Exchequer of the Empire. The *Regium Donum* is supplied from Downing-Street. But now they are both to be supplied by the confiscation of property which, whether it be Roman Catholic or Protestant property originally—I do not now go

into questions of that kind—both Roman Catholic and Protestant must agree with me is Irish property, and to that amount the Imperial Exchequer is to be relieved, in the face of pledges which all must acknowledge were repeatedly and solemnly given, and under which no such result could have been contemplated.

Now, let us see what may be the general result on the state of the Protestant Church when this measure is carried to completion; because, however unnatural, however impossible it may seem that the Church of Ireland should co-operate with the right hon. Gentleman, we cannot discuss the merits of this measure unless, as we proceed with it, we assume that the Church will, however unwillingly, co-operate with him. Assuming, then, that they will co-operate with him—assuming that his plan is carried out, let us glance at what in a few years will be the position of the Protestant Church in Ireland. And I put this before hon. Gentlemen on either side of the House, convinced that in respect to a great measure of this kind they must be impressed with the wisdom of acting with generosity as well as justice. Now, it is quite on the cards—it is not only possible, but highly probable—that in a certain number of years, probably in the ten years which the right hon. Gentleman fixes upon, the Irish Protestant Church will not have a shilling of property; while they will see, on the other hand, a richly endowed Roman Catholic clergy and a very comfortable Presbyterian body, and both provided for out of their own property. Well, is it desirable that such results, not of severe justice, but I say of unnecessary injustice, should be accomplished by Parliament? It is very true that it is said there is the sum of £500,000 which will go to the Irish Church in satisfaction of the private endowments created since 1660. I do not touch now on what I thought the highly unsatisfactory

part of the right hon. Gentleman's speech, fixing on the year 1660; for in criticising this measure, with the great indulgence of the House, I must, of course, omit many points. But the interest on that £500,000—which it is by no means clear to me will be £500,000, though I will take it as half a million—the interest on that sum would not keep in repair the churches of which we have heard so much. If they are to undertake the repair of those churches, there must be a fund for the purpose, and £16,000 or £17,000 a year would be absorbed in that way. Well, what else have they got? What is most extraordinary, the right hon. Gentleman has absolutely proposed that £20,000 a year for ten years, or £200,000 in all, should be given to the body of Church Commissioners in Dublin who are to manage this great transaction. Why, will not the new Church Body have as large a task to fulfil, which will probably cost them £10,000 a year, or it may be £20,000?—for, if they do their work completely, it can hardly be less expensive than that of the Church Commissioners. There must be funds to create and organise that new ecclesiastical world to which the right hon. Gentleman looks as the means of accomplishing his purpose.

So much for the general result upon the condition of the Irish Protestant Church; but I wish now to place before the House the general result of the whole scheme of confiscation. And what is it? It is the old story. Assuming—which I will do for the sake of argument—that the good sense and good temper of the House will modify all the arrangements about Maynooth, will take care that justice, ample justice, shall be done to that institution, but at the same time no injustice done to the Protestant Church, and that the engagements of the Ministry shall be completely fulfilled in that respect—assuming that to be the case, what do I see in this

Bill? Why, that the whole property of the Church of Ireland, generally speaking, will go to the landlords. Well, the landlords of Ireland have had a slice of that property before. For 30 years they have had £100,000 a year. They have probably had £3,000,000 of that property; and what good has it done them? Is the state of Ireland more tranquil and serene, or have they better preserved the institutions to which they were devoted, because they for a moment accepted any share of that plunder? Why, we all know that nothing of the kind has followed. And what is it that is now proposed? Why, a scheme which, when we come to investigate it, clearly shows that the whole of the tithe rent-charge is to be absorbed in the land. The right hon. Gentleman says that every landowner may buy up the tithe rent-charge on his land, when his tithe rent-charge will be instantly absorbed in his land; and then if the landowner will not buy the tithe rent-charge the right hon. Gentleman makes out a compulsory account by which the landowner shall seem to buy it. But the result is that the whole of the tithe rent-charge will be immediately absorbed in the land, and that there will be a complicated system of pecuniary transactions extending over a period of forty-five years. Five and forty years' engagements of Irish landlords! And that, too, in a country which confiscates Church property—in a country where there is a land question looming in the future. Do you not think that the landlords will want justice done to the land? Do you not think they will come forward and say, —"Well, if the land question must be settled, we will take a part in its settlement?" Depend upon it when the great rising occurs—when the great demand to which I have referred is made, and expounded by the eloquence and learning of the clergy of the three Churches—the Irish landlords will wonderfully sympathise with that new Act of Settlement. And

when that demand is made, the right hon. Gentleman will have either to accede to it, or he must take refuge in another alternative, which I will in a moment mention. Well, the tithe rent-charge is to be absorbed in the land, with engagements spreading over forty-five years. There have been engagements with the English Exchequer for shorter terms which were never fulfilled.

And what is done with the surplus? The surplus is given to the maintenance of pauper lunatics and other purposes of that kind. Well, but there are pauper lunatics in other countries besides Ireland. I have been looking into the number of pauper lunatics in Ireland and in England, and although we are told, as a Cabinet secret, that there are idiots peculiar to Ireland, I do not find that the number of pauper lunatics in Ireland is greater, relatively to population, than in England, or that in Ireland they cost more in proportion than they do here. English County Members generally are able to speak on this point. In my own county of Buckingham we have built within a very few years a lunatic asylum upon a costly scale. We did it in deference to the commands of an Act of Parliament, and it has added considerably to our rates. It may have been a necessary and proper expenditure, but was a very costly one. We have not yet fulfilled all our engagements in respect to it, and this has been one of those subjects which have occasioned considerable dissatisfaction among the great body of the population. No doubt the object is a proper one, but how can you justify yourself to your constituents who are grumbling about the county rates, especially supposing that you should have to pay £3,000 next Quarter Sessions, if they say, "We understand the Prime Minister, who affects to be the friend of the land, so far as Ireland is concerned, is going to have pauper lunatics

paid for out of the Church funds. Now, if the Irish Church is to be confiscated and the funds applied in this way, why should not our pauper lunatics have the same sort of support?" Sir, whatever is given for the maintenance of pauper lunatics or any object of that kind will go, or at least the great bulk of it will go, to the proprietors of the soil, whatever *hocus pocus* we may be told to the contrary. I entirely disapprove of that.

There is another subject to which at this hour I shall only very briefly advert. I will now assume that, notwithstanding the apparent impossibility of the Irish Church being induced to co-operate with the right hon. Gentleman, notwithstanding the unjust, and, as I think, preposterous arrangement which, if they did co-operate with him, they would assist in accomplishing—I will for the moment assume that this body will so co-operate with him, and will endeavour to carry out the purposes of this Bill, and therefore it is necessary to consider how the New Church Body is to be created. Consider the possibility of the thing. There are 700,000 Protestants scattered over Ireland. Sometimes they form a tolerably adequate portion of the population, but often a very sparse one. Although alarmed and aggrieved and smarting under what they consider intolerable injuries, and many of them under the influence of great fear, they are suddenly called upon by the Prime Minister of the country to accomplish that which would require all his ingenuity and all his statesmanlike power to achieve,—namely, to create a new ecclesiastical power independent of the State which shall accomplish all those offices which the Church in union with the State, and with its admirable temper when assisted by the State, has found it extremely difficult to fulfil and agree about. And this is to be done in the course of a few months. The clergy and the laity—

the plundered and perplexed clergy and laity—are to do that which would require constant Cabinet councils, and even years of mature and experienced deliberations. Who are the clergy and laity of Ireland? How are you to call the voices of these 700,000 scattered people? We are often told about the case of the disendowment of the Church in Canada—a most absurd instance to bring forward, as there is no analogy between the two cases. In Canada, indeed, you did say that the clergy and laity were to come to some decision on these important points, but then you defined the laity. In your Act you said that the laity should be represented, and you stated by what franchise the laity were to be elected. But nothing of the kind is proposed to be done now. No single step is taken to assist these men if they were willing to overcome the immense difficulties and obstacles which they must inevitably encounter. What is to be the result if they do not do that which no human being under such circumstances can do? Why the State is to seize upon the whole property of the Church, thus violating the first duty of a trustee, and shaking confidence in the tenure of property of every kind in the country. The State is to take the whole property of the Church to itself, and to do what it likes with it, defying law and justice, and treating the claims of the Protestants of Ireland with the utmost contumely and contempt.

Now, Sir, this is to be the remedial policy for Ireland. You have been disturbed and distracted by a clergy not connected with the State, and therefore you are now to have three sets of clergy not connected with the State. You have complained over and over again that one of the great evils of Ireland was the want of a variety of classes. But here is an Act which destroys a class. You have told us night after night that the curse of Ireland was the want of

resident proprietors, but here is legislation to do away with a great number of resident proprietors. The curse of Ireland, as every one knows, is its poverty, but here is an Act to confiscate property!

Sir, I said there was an alternative. When I ventured to express to the House the probable consequences of this scheme of the right hon. Gentleman, I stated to the House that they must contemplate the possibility of great and continued discontent in Ireland; that that discontent would be connected with the question of the tenure of land; that the clergy disendowed according to their own statements at different periods, but both of them agreeing that they had been disendowed, would become the natural and powerful mouthpieces of this general discontent; and that you would have to yield to the demands which the whole nation through its most powerful organs would advance, and with which demands I venture to say the Irish landlords would unite. Their claim would be for restoration. All classes would call upon you to restore the popular estate which you have confiscated, and, whatever difference of opinion might still subsist between different Churches, all Churches would agree that Irish property was national property. I say, then, that you would have to consent to that restoration unless you took refuge in an alternative. I think the alternative would be this. I think you might resist what was called a restoration of their rights, and which would probably bring about a scene of universal tumult. Instead of complying with this demand you would say to them,—"There shall be religious equality between the two countries. You disendowed clergy shall not have ground to complain of being treating differently from any clergy, and we will apply to the Church in England the same principles which we have applied to the Church ir Ireland." That conclusion appears to me to be inevitable. I have no

doubt that there are some gentlemen who hear me who would not regret such a consummation. I am perfectly aware that there are Gentlemen sitting in this House who approve such a policy, and that they have in the country a party which likewise approves such a policy. But I do not approve such a policy, and I am sure, whatever their majority may be, they will not grudge me the right of asserting in this house the propriety of my opinion. Sir, I believe that that result will be inevitable. Indeed, it may be inferred from the language of the Prime Minister that he himself though he may not now approve, still contemplates it. Now, I cannot believe that the disendowment of the Church of England could occur without very great disturbances. I am convinced that it might lead to consequences which those who have not given a very long consideration to the subject may think impossible or remote. I believe that these consequences would be near at hand. England cannot afford revolution. England has had her revolutions. It is indeed because she had revolutions about 200 years ago, before other nations had their revolutions, that she gained her great start in wealth and in empire.

Now, Sir, what have we gained by those revolutions? A period of nearly 200 years of great serenity and the secured stability of the State. I attribute these happy characteristics of our history to the circumstance, that in this interval we did solve two of the finest and profoundest political problems. We accomplished complete personal and, in time, complete political liberty and combined them with order. We achieved complete religious liberty, and we united it with a national faith. These two immense exploits have won for this country regulated freedom and temperate religion, and these blessings we have, I am bound to say, secured mainly by the action—sometimes the unconscious action—but entirely by the action of the two great parties in the

State. I have often, when I have had to consider the history of what are called Whigs and Tories, been surprised that—after great national vicissitudes, and notwithstanding the enormous blunders and mistakes which confessedly both have made, and the occasional violence, not to say faction, of their conduct which our annals record—these two great parties should always reappear. That fact proves that there must be something very deep in their roots, and that they must have touched the heart of the people.

Speaking now, not as a partisan, I believe the Tory party, however it may at times have erred, has always been the friend of local government, and that the instinct of the nation made it feel that on local government political freedom depended. It has been the glorious privilege of the great Whig party to achieve religious liberty, because by as wise an instinct they felt that religious liberty must be based on the connexion between civil authority and ecclesiastical influence. These have secured to us the advantages we enjoy. In this age we seem to have forgotten by what heroic efforts the great blessings of regulated freedom and temperate religion have been secured, and how much they have tended to the greatness and the glory of our common country. Custom has made this a strong and tradition has made it a wise nation. There are now high-flying statesmen who make war on tradition and scorn custom. I, for one, will not take upon myself the responsibility of their courses. I have expressed feebly, but freely, as our political life permits, my view of the policy of the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government. I believe the Bill he has introduced for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church in Ireland to be a dangerous measure, and I leave its consideration with confidence to the prudence and patriotism of Parliament.

THE ACQUIREMENT OF KNOWLEDGE.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE MANCHESTER ATHENÆUM, OCTOBER 3, 1844.

LADIES and GENTLEMEN,—When I last had the honour of addressing the members of the Manchester Athenæum they were struggling for the existence of their institution. That was a critical moment in their fortunes. They had incurred a considerable debt in its establishment; the number of its members had gradually, and even for some years considerably, decreased; and, in appealing to the sympathies of the community, they were, unfortunately, appealing to those who were themselves only emerging from a period of severe and lengthened suffering. A year has elapsed, and the efforts that you then made to extricate yourselves from those difficulties may now be fairly examined. That considerable debt has been liquidated; the number of your members has been trebled—I believe quadrupled; and I am happy to say that your fortunes have rallied, while that suffering and surrounding community once more meet together in prosperity and success.

I think it not inopportune, at this moment of security and serene fortune, that we should clearly understand the object for which this great struggle has been made. Under circumstances which, if not desperate, filled you with the darkest gloom, you resolved like men to exert your utmost energies; you applied yourselves to those difficulties with manly energy—with manly discretion. Not too confident in yourselves, you appealed, and appealed successfully, to the softer sex, who you thought would sympathise with an institution intended to humanise and refine. *Dux fœmina facti* might indeed be the motto of your institution, for it was mainly by their influence you obtained the result which we now celebrate. But if the object you had at stake was of so great consequence, if it justified exertions so remarkable, made too at a moment when energy was doubly valuable, because all were dispirited, it would, I think, be not unwise for us clearly to understand what was the object for which we then exerted ourselves, whether it was one which justified that great sacrifice, and, if it were, to inquire why it was ever imperilled. To-night we are honoured by many, who, like myself, are strangers, except in feeling, to your community. We are honoured too by the presence of deputations from many societies in this county and the North of England, who acknowledge a sympathy and an analogy of pursuit with the Athenæum of Manchester. It will be well then to place before them briefly for their instruction, and perhaps it may not be without profit to remind you, what that institution is that you have struggled to uphold, but the existence of which was once in danger.

I think it is seven or eight years ago that some of the leading members of your community, remembering perhaps that there was a time when they regretted that for them such advantages did not exist, thought they would establish in

this great city some institution that might offer to the youth of Manchester relaxation which might elevate, and a distraction which would save them from a senseless dissipation. They thought the time had arrived when a duty devolved on those who took a leading part in the community that they should sympathise with the wants of the rising race, and therefore they resolved to establish an institution where the advantages I have referred to might be supplied. With these views they resolved, in the first instance, that some place should be supplied where the youth of Manchester might become perfectly acquainted with the passing mind and passions, and feelings, and intelligence of the age. That idea was the foundation of your news-room. They rightly understood that the newspaper was the most effective arm of the press. It may in fact be considered as the infantry of the press. It is not indeed a complete battalion—you require ordnance and artillery, and a brilliant cavalry; above all, you require the staff and commander-in-chief, that, without absolutely or actively interfering in the fray, surveys all that occurs, and is ready at all times to apply itself to the quarter which requires counsel; but still you may consider the journal as the most efficient arm of the press. With these views they furnished a chamber in which the members of the Athenæum might become acquainted, by the perusal of the chief journals of the empire, with all that was passing in the country, all that was agitating and interesting the public mind—which might supply them with that information, and guide them in forming those opinions, which it is the duty of every citizen of a free community to be acquainted with and to entertain. But, conscious that, however qualified the journal is to stimulate curiosity, to assist investigation, to guide opinion, the knowledge of that individual that is limited by the daily press is in danger of

becoming superficial, you thought that the members of this institution should have some means of consulting the more matured opinions, the more accurate researches of the literary mind of this and other countries, and wisely you made the chamber in which they might read the newspaper an anteroom only to the library. You formed a collection which is now not contemptible in numbers, for you may count it by thousands; which, however, is not so great as many of you must desire, and which, in passing, I may be permitted to say with great humility, is deficient in one respect which is no disgrace to it, because it is a deficiency which is shared by every great collection in this country, and I believe in Europe, but which I should be glad and you would be proud to see supplied in Manchester—I mean in that department which may be described as a commercial library. Manchester, which was once merely an assemblage of manufactures, is now a great mercantile emporium, and at slight expense and with no great difficulty, if there were sufficient zeal, you might make a collection of all those interesting and isolated tracts on commerce which at various times during the last century appeared in England, which now with difficulty you can refer to, but which would form in a collection a peculiar and interesting body of commercial literature, and which, by the bye, you cannot find in the national repository of this country.

You who had thus furnished the members of this institution with the journal which gave them the information and feelings of the hour, the library where they might correct the hasty opinions which perhaps that passing criticism is apt to engender—you knew there were many not deficient in ability, not deficient in aptness or feeling, to whom the very ceremony of reading is irksome, and who require to be appealed to by another means perhaps at first sight more captivating. Therefore you formed a theatre

where lectures were given, where the experiments of philosophy, the investigations of literature, and the prolusions of art, were rendered agreeable to the audience by the charms of the human voice. You were not content with having raised an institution where the journal, the library, and the lecture-room were always prepared to enlighten or amuse—you remembered those wise words of Charles V., who said that "the man who knew two languages had two souls and two lives," and therefore you established classes by which the youth of this city might initiate themselves in a knowledge of the modern languages. Your plan was comprehensive, but it was not limited even by this fourth division. You knew well that in a free country, in a country that prides itself upon the science and practice of self-government, it is the duty—at least it is the interest—of all men to be able to express themselves in public with perspicuity, and, if possible, with elegance; therefore you established a discussion society, an institution in harmony with the political life and social manners of England. Having thus amply provided for the formation of the mind of your new and rising community, you still remembered (borrowing a happy idea from those races of antiquity to whom you owe your name) that any education that confined itself to sedentary pursuits was essentially imperfect, that the body as well as the mind should be cultivated—you wisely, and in no common and ordinary spirit, established a gymnasium. These are the principal characteristics of your institution. There are others on which it would be wearisome to dwell; but I have placed before you six principal objects that you had desired to attain. Having taken this large and comprehensive view of the wants of your society, and meeting them with a spirit so liberal and large, you took the best and wisest step. You knew well the effect that architecture pro-

duces on the human mind: you determined therefore that your establishment should be embodied in an edifice that should please the imagination and satisfy the taste. You invited the most eminent of modern architects. Under the roof of a noble elevation you supplied the means for pursuing those studies that I have indicated; and this is a simple account of the Manchester Athenæum.

It is difficult to conceive how a nobler purpose, if for a moment we dilate upon it, could have animated your intentions. When we remember the class of your community for which this institution was particularly adapted,—when we conceive, difficult as it is, surrounded as we now are with luxury and pleasure,—when we attempt to picture to our imaginations what is the position of a youth, perhaps of very tender years, sent, as I am informed is very frequently the case, from a remote district, to form his fortunes in this great metropolis of labour and of science,—when we think of that youth, tender in age, with no domestic hearth to soothe and stimulate, to counsel or control,—when we picture him to ourselves after a day of indefatigable toil, left to his lonely evenings and his meagre lodgings without a friend and without a counsellor, flying to dissipation from sheer want of distraction, and perhaps involved in vice before he is conscious of the fatal net that is surrounding him—what a contrast to his position does it offer when we picture him to ourselves with a feeling of self-confidence, which supports and sustains him after his day of toil, entering a great establishment where every thing that can satisfy curiosity, that can form taste, that can elevate the soul of man, and lead to noble thoughts and honourable intentions, surrounds him! When we think of the convenience and the comfort, the kindness and the sympathy which, with a due decorum of manners, he is sure to command,

—this youth, who but a few hours before was a stranger —viewing an institution like the present only in this limited aspect, one must regard it as a great harbour of intellectual refuge and social propriety.

If my description of what this institution offers to us, if my view of what it in some degree supplies, be just, what, I must inquire, is the reason that an institution, the prosperity of which now cannot be doubted, but so brief a time ago could have been apparently in the last stage of its fortunes? It is not an agreeable task—I fear it may be considered by some an invidious one—if I, who am a stranger among you, should attempt to play the critic upon your conduct; but I feel confidence in your indulgence. I remember the kindness which has placed me in this honourable position, and therefore I shall venture to express to you the two reasons to which I think the dangerous state of our position must fairly be ascribed. I would say, in the first place, without imputing the slightest fault to the originators of this institution, wishing to be most distinctly understood as not only not imputing any fault to them, but most decidedly being of opinion that the fault does not lie at their door; still I cannot shut my eyes to the fact, that, in the origin of this institution, by circumstances not foreseen, and which certainly were not intended, a party, a limited, and a sectarian feeling, in some degree pervaded its management. I confess, myself, that it appears to me that it would have been a marvel had it been otherwise. When we remember the great changes that had then but very recently occurred in this country—when we recall to our mind not only the great changes that had occurred, but the still greater ones that were menaced and discussed—when we remember what an influence is created when local jealousy blends with political passion—it is not difficult to imagine, because there

are none of us present but in their sphere must have felt its influence—it is not wonderful that men of different political opinions should look with extreme jealousy upon each other. A combination of peculiar circumstances that created a balanced state of parties in those places where the struggle for dominion and power takes place, very much assisted this feeling; and that such a feeling existed throughout all England in a degree more intense and more virulent than has ever been equalled in the history of this country, I think no man will deny, and all must deplore. For my own part, I really believe that, had that party and sectarian feeling proceeded in the same ratio of virulence as it has done for the last twelve or fourteen years, it must have exercised a barbarising influence upon public sentiments and public manners. There are some amongst us now, I know, who believe that the period has arrived when a great effort must be made to emancipate this country from the degrading thraldom of faction—to terminate, if possible, that extreme, that sectarian, and limited view, in which all human conduct is examined, observed, and criticised—to put an end to that exclusiveness, which, in its peculiar sphere, is just as deleterious as that aristocratical exclusiveness of manners which has produced so much evil; and, as far as I can form an opinion, these views have met with sympathy from every part of the country. I look upon it that to-night—I hope I am not mistaken—we are met to consummate and to celebrate the emancipation of this city, at least as far as the Athenæum extends, from the influence of these feelings. I hope that our minds and our hearts are alike open to the true character of this institution, to the necessities which have created it, to the benefits to which it leads; and happy I shall be, and all, I am sure, who are assisting me this evening, if it prove that our efforts, however humble, may have assisted in so delightful and so desirable a consummation.

Now, that is one of the reasons, why I believe a blight seemed to have fallen over our fortunes. I think at the same time that there is another cause that has, until recently, exercised an injurious effect upon the position of this institution. I think that a too limited view of its real character has been taken even by those who were inclined to view it in a spirit of extreme friendliness. It has been looked upon in the light of a luxury, and not of a necessity —as a means of enjoyment in the hour of prosperity from which we ought to be debarred when the adverse moment has arrived; so that when trade was prospering, when all was sunshine, a man might condescend to occupy his spare hours in something else than in a melancholy brooding over the state of the country—that, when returns were rapid and profits ready, one might deign to cultivate one's faculties, and become acquainted with what the mind of Europe was conceiving or executing; but these were delights to be reserved only for those chosen hours. Now that, I am bound frankly to say, is not the view which I take of this question—not the idea which I have formed of the real character of the Manchester Athenæum. I look upon it as part of that great educational movement which is the noble and ennobling characteristic of the age in which we live. Viewing it in that light, I cannot consent myself that it shall be supported by fits and starts. The impulse which has given us that movement in modern times is one that may be traced to an age that may now be considered remote, though the swell of the waters has but recently approached our own shores. Heretofore society was established necessarily on a very different principle to that which is now its basis. As civilisation has gradually progressed, it has equalised the physical qualities of man. Instead of the strong arm it is the strong head that is now the moving

principle of society. You have disenthroned Force, and placed on her high seat Intelligence; and the necessary consequence of this great revolution is, that it has become the duty and the delight equally of every citizen to cultivate his faculties. The prince of all philosophy has told you, in an immortal apophthegm so familiar to you all that it is written now in your halls and chambers, "Knowledge is power." If that memorable passage had been pursued by the student who first announced this discovery of that great man to society, he would have found an oracle not less striking, and in my mind certainly not less true; for Lord Bacon has not only said that "knowledge is power," but living one century after the discovery of the printing-press, he has also announced to the world that "knowledge is pleasure." Why, when the great body of mankind had become familiar with this great discovery—when they learned that a new source was opened to them of influence and enjoyment, is it wonderful that from that hour the heart of nations has palpitated with the desire of becoming acquainted with all that has happened, and with speculating on what may occur? It has indeed produced upon the popular intellect an influence almost as great as—I might say analogous to—the great change which was produced upon the old commercial world by the discovery of the Americas. A new standard of value was introduced, and, after this, to be distinguished, man must be intellectual. Nor, indeed, am I surprised that this feeling has so powerfully influenced our race; for the idea that human happiness is dependent on the cultivation of the mind, and on the discovery of truth, is, next to the conviction of our immortality, the idea the most full of consolation to man; for the cultivation of the mind has no limits, and truth is the only thing that is eternal. Indeed, when you consider what a

man is who knows only what is passing under his own eyes, and what the condition of the same man must be who belongs to an institution like the one which has assembled us together to-night, is it—ought it to be—a matter of surprise that, from that moment to the present, you have had a general feeling throughout the civilised world in favour of the diffusion of knowledge? A man who knows nothing but the history of the passing hour, who knows nothing of the history of the past, but that a certain person whose brain was as vacant as his own occupied the same house as himself, who in a moment of despondency or of gloom has no hope in the morrow because he has read nothing that has taught him that the morrow has any changes—that man, compared with him who has read the most ordinary abridgment of history, or the most common philosophical speculation, is as distinct and different an animal as if he had fallen from some other planet, was influenced by a different organisation, working for a different end, and hoping for a different result. It is knowledge that equalises the social condition of man—that gives to all, however different their political position, passions which are in common, and enjoyments which are universal. Knowledge is like the mystic ladder in the patriarch's dream. Its base rests on the primeval earth—its crest is lost in the shadowy splendour of the empyrean; while the great authors who for traditionary ages have held the chain of science and philosophy, of poesy and erudition, are the angels ascending and descending the sacred scale, and maintaining, as it were, the communication between man and heaven. This feeling is so universal that there is no combination of society in any age in which it has not developed itself. It may, indeed, be partly restrained under despotic governments, under peculiar systems of retarded civilisation; but it is a conse-

quence as incidental to the spirit and the genius of the Christian civilisation of Europe, as that the day should follow night, and the stars should shine according to their laws and order. Why, the very name of the institution that brings us together illustrates the fact—I can recall, and I think I see more than one gentleman around me who equally can recall the hours in which we wandered amid

"Fields that cool Ilyssus laves."

I am sure, at least, that my honourable Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) has a lively recollection of that immortal stream, for I remember one of the most effective allusions he made to it in one of the most admirable speeches I ever listened to. But, notwithstanding that allusion, I would still appeal to the poetry of his constitution, and I know it abounds in that quality. I am sure that he could not have looked without emotion on that immortal scene. I still can remember that olive-crowned plain, that sunset crag, that citadel fane of ineffable beauty! That was a brilliant civilisation developed by a gifted race more than 2000 years ago; at a time when the ancestors of the manufacturers of Manchester, who now clothe the world, were themselves covered with skins, and tattooed like the red men of the wilderness. But influences more powerful even than the awful lapse of time separate and distinguish you from that race. They were the children of the sun; you live in a distant, a rugged, and northern clime. They bowed before different altars, they followed different customs, they were modified by different manners. Votaries of the Beautiful, they sought in Art the means of embodying their passionate conceptions; you have devoted your energies to Utility; and by the means of a power almost unknown to

antiquity, by its miraculous agencies, you have applied its creative force to every combination of human circumstances that could produce your objects. Yet, amid the toil and triumphs of your scientific industry, upon you there comes the undefinable, the irresistible yearning for intellectual refinement—you build an edifice consecrated to those beautiful emotions and to those civilising studies in which they excelled, and you impress upon its front a name taken from—

> "Where on Ægean shores a city rose,
> Built nobly, clear the air, and light the soil,
> Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts
> And eloquence!"

What a beautiful tribute to immortal genius! What a sublime incentive to eternal fame! Then, when the feeling is so universal, when it is one which modern civilisation is nurturing and developing, who does not feel that it is not only the most benevolent, but the most politic thing you can do to avail yourselves of its influence, and to direct in every way the formation of that character upon which intellect must now necessarily exercise an irresistible influence? We cannot shut our eyes any longer to the immense revolution which has taken place. Knowledge is no longer a lonely eremite that offers an occasional and captivating hospitality to some wandering pilgrim; knowledge is now found in the market-place, a citizen and a leader of citizens. The spirit has touched the multitude; it has impregnated the mass—

> "—— Totamque infusa per artus,
> Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet."*

* VIRG. *Æn.* vi. 726, 727:—

> This active mind, infused through all the space,
> Unites and mingles with the mighty mass.
>
> *Dryden's Translation.*

I would say one word now to those for whom this institution is not entirely but principally formed. I would address myself to the youth on whom the hopes of all societies repose and depend. I doubt not that they feel conscious of the position which they occupy—a position which, under all circumstances, at all periods, and in every clime and country, is one replete with duty. The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity; but the youth I address have duties peculiar to the position which they occupy. They are the rising generation of a society unprecedented in the history of the world; that is at once powerful and new. In other parts of the kingdom the remains of an ancient civilisation are prepared to guide, to cultivate, to influence the rising mind; but they are born in a miraculous creation of novel powers, and it is rather a providential instinct that has developed the necessary means of maintaining the order of your new civilisation, than the matured foresight of man. This is their inheritance. They will be called on to perform duties—great duties. I, for one, wish for their sakes and for the sake of our country, that they may be performed greatly. I give to them that counsel which I have ever given to youth, and which I believe to be the wisest and the best—I tell them to aspire. I believe that the man who does not look up will look down; and that the spirit that does not dare to soar is destined perhaps to grovel. Every individual is entitled to aspire to that position which he believes his faculties qualify him to occupy. I know there are some who look with what I believe to be a short-sighted timidity and false prudence upon such views. They are apt to tell us—"Beware of filling the youthful mind with an impetuous tumult of turbulent fancies; teach him, rather, to be content with his position—do not induce him to fancy that he is that which he is not, or to aspire to that which he cannot achieve." In my mind

these are superficial delusions. He who enters the world finds his level. It is the solitary being, the isolated individual alone in his solitude, who may be apt to miscalculate his powers, and misunderstand his character. But action teaches him the truth, even if it be a stern one. Association offers him the best criticism in the world, and I will venture to say that if he belong to the Athenæum, though when he enters it he may think himself a genius, if nature has not given him a creative and passionate soul, before a week has elapsed he will become a very sober-minded individual. I wish to damp no youthful ardour. I can conceive what opportunities such an institution as this would have afforded to the suggestive mind of a youthful Arkwright. I can conceive what a nursing-mother such an institution must have been to the brooding genius of your illustrious and venerated Dalton. It is the asylum of the self-formed; it is the counsellor of those who want counsel, but it is not a guide that will mislead, and it is the last place that will fill the mind of man with false ideas and false conceptions. He reads a newspaper, and his conceit oozes out after reading a leading article. He refers to the library, and the calm wisdom of centuries and sages moderates the rash impulse of juvenescence. He finds new truths in the lecture-room, and he goes home with a conviction that he is not so learned as he imagined. In the discussion of a great question with his equals in station, perhaps he finds he has his superiors in intellect. These are the means by which the mind of man is brought to a healthy state, by which that self-knowledge that always has been lauded by sages may be most securely attained. It is a rule of universal virtue, and from the senate to the counting-house will be found of universal application. Then, to the youth of Manchester, repre[redacted]ting the civic youth of this great county and this great [redacted] now appeal. Let it never be said again that the

fortunes of this institution were in danger. Let them take advantage of this hour of prosperity calmly to examine and deeply to comprehend the character of that institution in which their best interests are involved, and which for them may afford a relaxation which brings no pang, and yields information which may bear them to fortune. It is to them I appeal with confidence, because I feel I am pleading their cause—with confidence, because in them I repose my hopes. When nations fall, it is because a degenerate race intervenes between the class that created and the class that is doomed. Let them then remember what has been done for them. The leaders of their community have not been remiss in regard to their interests. Let them remember, that when the inheritance devolves upon them, they are not only to enjoy but to improve. They will some day succeed to the high places of this great community; let them recollect those who lighted the way for them; and when they have wealth, when they have authority, when they have power, let it not be said that they were deficient in public virtue and public spirit. When the torch is delivered to them, let them also light the path of human progress to educated man.

THE CRIMEAN WAR.

I.

VOTE OF THANKS TO THE ALLIED FORCES.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, DECEMBER 15, 1854.

SIR, there have been occasions in the history of this country when votes similar to these have been proposed to the House, when Members have entered into criticisms on the conduct of commanders and the policy of Ministers, but, I am sure, however much we may venerate Parliamentary precedents, that the House must have sympathized with the noble Lord, * when he said that to-night there would be no difference of opinion upon the motion he was about to submit to our notice. The noble Lord has treated the theme which he has introduced in a manner so entirely worthy of its interest, that it would be unnecessary and unbecoming in me to enter into any detail of those actions which have recently commanded the admiration of the world. But I feel I am expressing the opinion of all present, when I say that this is no common war, that will some day be covered with the mere dust of history. I feel that this is a war which will rank with those great struggles

* Lord John Russell.

which produce not only historians, but, in time, even poets, to celebrate their lasting achievements; like those famous deeds of the Crusades handed down to the wonder and admiration of man—and many of which have been accomplished in the memorable region where these great exploits are occurring. If I may be permitted for a moment to allude to what seems to be a characteristic feature, there is a singular completeness in this the first campaign of the allied armies which has scarcely attracted observation. The campaign opens by the allied troops taking by storm one of the most difficult positions in the world—an almost impregnable position; and it concludes, virtually, two months afterwards, by the same forces defending a similar position from a similar attack by an immense host. Thus we see, both in assault and defence, the same troops exhibiting the same admirable and unequalled qualities. Between these two almost epic events, I ought not to forget that there is a brilliant episode—that fight of Balaklava—that was a feat of chivalry, fiery with consummate courage, and bright with flashing valour; and though I cannot presume, with the authority of the noble Lord, to single out the names of great commanders for the applause of the House of Commons, I cannot forget, I cannot refrain from calling to your recollection, that the two commanders on that memorable occasion lately sat among us on these benches, and that they, I am sure, will peculiarly value the sympathy of the colleagues whom they have quitted. Sir, the noble Lord has very properly said that it is not for the House to criticize the tactics and strategy of campaigns; but it is open to us to draw some moral conclusions from the great events which are passing around us, and we may at least draw this from the war which has broken out. I think, what has occurred has shown that the arts of peace practised by a free people are not enervating. I

think the deeds to which the noble Lord has referred, both among the commanders and common soldiers, have shown that education has not a tendency to diminish, but to refine and raise, the standard of the martial character. In these we may proudly recognise the might and prowess of a free and ancient people, led by their natural and traditionary chiefs. These are all circumstances and conditions which are favourable to our confidence in the progress of civilization, and flattering, I hope, to the consciousness of every Englishman.

There is one point upon which I could have wished that the noble Lord had also touched—I know there were so many subjects that he could not avoid touching that I share the admiration of the House at the completeness with which he seemed to have mastered all his themes; but when the noble Lord recalled to our recollection the deeds of admirable valour and of heroic conduct which have been achieved upon the heights of Alma, of Balaklava, and of Inkermann, I could have wished that he had also publicly recognized that the deeds of heroism in this campaign had not been merely confined to the field of battle. We ought to remember the precious lives given to the pestilence of Varna and to the inhospitable shores of the Black Sea; these men, in my opinion, were animated by as heroic a spirit as those who have yielded up their lives amid the flash of artillery and the triumphant sound of trumpets. No, Sir, language cannot do justice to the endurance of our troops under the extreme and terrible privations which circumstances have obliged them to endure. The high spirit of an English gentleman might have sustained him under circumstances which he could not have anticipated to encounter; but the same proud patience has been found among the rank and file. And it is these moral qualities that have contributed as much

as others apparently more brilliant to those great victories which we are now acknowledging.

Sir, the noble Lord has taken a wise and gracious course in combining with the thanks which he is about to propose to the British army and navy the thanks also of the House of Commons to the army of our allies. Sir, that alliance which has now for some time prevailed between the two great countries of France and Britain has in peace been productive of advantage, but it is the test to which it has been put by recent circumstances that, in my opinion, will tend more than any other cause to confirm and consolidate that intimate union. That alliance, Sir, is one that does not depend upon dynasties or diplomacy. It is one which has been sanctioned by names to which we all look up with respect or with feelings even of a higher character. The alliance between France and England was inaugurated by the imperial mind of Elizabeth, and sanctioned by the profound sagacity of Cromwell; it exists now not more from feelings of mutual interest than from feelings of mutual respect, and I believe it will be maintained by a noble spirit of emulation.

Sir, there is still another point upon which, although with hesitation, I will advert for a moment. I am distrustful of my own ability to deal becomingly with a theme on which the noble Lord so well touched; but nevertheless I feel that I must refer to it. I was glad to hear from the noble Lord that he intends to propose a vote of condolence with the relatives of those who have fallen in this contest. Sir, we have already felt, even in this chamber of public assemblage, how bitter have been the consequences of this war. We cannot throw our eyes over the accustomed benches, where we miss many a gallant and genial face, without feeling our hearts ache, our spirits sadden, and even our eyes mois-

ten. But if that be our feeling here when we miss the long companions of our public lives and labours, what must be the anguish and desolation which now darken so many hearths! Never, Sir, has the youthful blood of this country been so profusely lavished as it has been in this contest, —never has a greater sacrifice been made, and for ends which more fully sanctify the sacrifice. But we can hardly hope now, in the greenness of the wound, that even these reflections can serve as a source of solace. Young women who have become widows almost as soon as they had become wives—mothers who have lost not only their sons, but the brethren of those sons—heads of families who have seen abruptly close all their hopes of an hereditary line—these are pangs which even the consciousness of duty performed, which even the lustre of glory won, cannot easily or speedily alleviate and assuage. But let us indulge at least in the hope, in the conviction, that the time will come when the proceedings of this evening may be to such persons a source of consolation—when sorrow for the memory of those that are departed may be mitigated by the recollection that their death is at least associated with imperishable deeds, with a noble cause, and with a nation's gratitude.

THE CRIMEAN WAR.

II.

THE ARMY IN THE CRIMEA.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, JANUARY 30, 1855.

AFTER the remarkable admissions which have been made in the course of this debate by Members of the Government, it is unnecessary for me to-night at all to indulge in that "slow" process which the right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been reminded of by an hon. Baronet (Sir E. B. Lytton), and to which he so good-humouredly alluded. Sir, this debate was commenced by an hon. and learned Gentleman* to whom we always listen with attention and respect; and when he suddenly ceased from addressing us, remembering that he was an accomplished orator, I almost at first supposed that it was an artifice of rhetoric when he merely moved the resolution which he has now, Sir, placed in your hands; for if there ever were a resolution upon a great question of national interest submitted to the House of Commons

* Mr. Roebuck.

which required no arguments to support it, and no arts of oratory to enforce it and recommend it to the adoption of the House, it was, in my opinion, the resolution which the hon. and learned Gentleman submitted to us on Friday last; because, before the hon. and learned Gentleman had risen, in pursuance of his notice, to bring that resolution before our consideration, a noble Lord, who had been but within a few hours the Chief Minister of the Crown in this House, had admitted the case of the hon. and learned Gentleman—had made a public declaration which, in my mind, rendered the step taken by the hon. and learned Member for Sheffield not only justifiable, but necessary, inevitable; and it appeared to me impossible, after the admission, or rather the declaration, of the noble Lord, that any gentleman in this House could have found himself justified in opposing the motion of the hon. and learned Gentleman.

This will bring me to the last observations of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The right hon. gentleman has taken the instance of the inquiry into the Walcheren expedition, and has said to my right hon. Friend (Mr. Walpole), "You have urged upon us what is a false resemblance between the present state of affairs and that which existed at the time of the investigation into Walcheren; and I will show you points of difference which you cannot contest." I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer. There are points of difference between the present case and that of the inquiry into Walcheren. No Minister of the Crown, in the case of the Walcheren expedition, had come forward and said that the state of affairs in his mind demanded inquiry—that, with all the advantages of his official position and of his accumulated Parliamentary experience, there was in that state of affairs something inexplicable to

him. In the case of Walcheren, instead of the First Minister of the Crown in this House making such admissions, you had him urging the inexpediency of the course, and telling us that information was not required in many particulars, and that in others it was inexpedient to give it. After all the arguments of the Chancellor of the Exchequer upon this parallel between the present circumstances and those which attended the inquiry into Walcheren, let us for a moment remember what are the circumstances which we have to consider, and let us take that broad and common sense view of them which the people of this country have for some time adopted.

You do not deny that a great army has perished in a distant country to which it has been sent. The Chancellor of the Exchequer says that the amount of our loss has been misrepresented and exaggerated. He says that it was an army of 54,000 men, or 56,000 men, and that there are 30,000 still bearing arms, and that only 24,000, or 26,000, therefore have perished. Is not that then, I ask, a subject worthy of inquiry? But the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the same time dilates upon the contradictory accounts which exist upon the subject. Well, then, is there not some ground for inquiry, when it is a question whether 20,000 or 30,000 British troops have disappeared; when the First Minister of the Crown in this House tells us, with the advantage of his official experience, that the causes of that loss are inexplicable to him, and when the Chancellor of the Exchequer tells us that the greatest misconceptions and misrepresentations exist upon the subject? I ask you, is not that a fair ground for inquiry into a subject so interesting to the people of this country? But, says the Chancellor of the Exchequer, still harping upon the instance of Walcheren, would you justify yourselves in the present case by

having recourse to means and measures which in that instance might have been justified because the transactions to which they referred were concluded? But the Chancellor of the Exchequer has misconceived, or has for a moment forgotten, the nature of the motion of the hon. and learned Member for Sheffield. The motion of the hon. and learned Gentleman is not to inquire into the conduct of the war; it is not a motion which requires us to call before us French and English witnesses, the authorities of rival armies, persons connected with different countries, and owning a different allegiance.

The motion of the hon. and learned Gentleman is to inquire into the condition of the army before Sebastopol, and whether that condition has been occasioned by the maladministration of the Government departments connected with the army. Now, Sir, that is a simple issue; but I doubt whether it is an issue which can be raised and investigated at the conclusion of the war. Suppose that the present war were to last as long as the late war, could you at the end of twenty years pretend to inquire into the condition of the army "now" before Sebastopol? It might be a legitimate course to postpone to the conclusion of the struggle the discussion of the principles and policy upon which it had been conducted; but the present question appears to me to be of an instant and urgent character, and which, if ever inquired into, can only be inquired into at this moment. Then the right hon. Gentleman dwells upon the inevitable character of an investigation of this kind by Parliament into the administration of those in office, and he says that it is a mockery whether before a select Committee, or before a Committee of the whole House—the investigation is a mockery, because, he says, that carrying the motion for inquiry is clearly a censure upon the Government. But that

was not the opinion of Sir S. Romilly in the debate upon the Walcheren expedition. I quote a name, Sir, still remembered and respected by the Whig party. Sir S. Romilly, meeting an objection of this kind, said, "If you lay down that doctrine, you may as well lay down the doctrine that a man is condemned because he is put upon his trial."

Well, Sir, we have now before us the motion of the hon. and learned Member for Sheffield, to which there appear to be, so far as I can collect the course of the debate, three main objections. The first objection is that of my hon. friend the Member for West Norfolk (Mr. Bentinck) that it is a censure upon the Commander of the Forces in the Crimea. Now, Sir, if I thought that by any ingenuity the language of the motion could be construed into a censure upon the conduct of Lord Raglan, or of any general officer in the Crimea, I should be the last man who would vote for it, or who would in any way sanction it; but I cannot, I confess, in any way apply to it such an interpretation; and I declare, if I had written the motion myself, entertaining those feelings towards Lord Raglan to which I have referred, that I could not have devised language which I should have imagined would be less likely to be supposed to convey the slightest imputation against the noble Lord. The motion refers to the condition of the army, to its physical condition in that country. It wishes to inquire how far that condition, which we so much deplore, and which we believe to be so calamitous, has been occasioned by the conduct of any department of the Government. How, therefore, can such an interpretation be placed upon it? Nor do I believe that it is one which can, for a moment, be entertained.

The second objection to this motion is that it is of an unconstitutional and inconvenient character. That I have

already sufficiently touched upon in adverting to the instance of Walcheren, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer has introduced to our notice to-night. I confess I do not think that any inconvenience would occur from any Committee of the House of Commons visiting the heights of Sebastopol. We have to consider whether there shall be an inquiry into a specific subject—the condition of the army. Such an inquiry I believe to be perfectly constitutional, and, in my mind, it would not be inconvenient.

But then, Sir, comes the third and main objection to the motion of the hon. and learned Member for Sheffield, and that is that it conveys, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer says, a censure upon the Government, or, as a colleague of his who preceded him stated, it implies a want of confidence in the Administration. Now, Sir, let us endeavour to understand what is meant by the want of confidence which this motion is said to carry. I think we have a right to ask from the Government, who are resisting the motion, on the ground that it implies a want of confidence—I think we have a right to ask them this question—In what Government does it imply a want of confidence? Does it imply a want of confidence in the Administration which existed forty-eight hours ago? But the noble Lord, late the First Minister of the Crown in this House, has quitted that Government; and he has quitted it with a happy description of the feelings that prevailed among its members, and of the cordiality which animated their councils. I do not think, therefore, that the Government will resist this motion on the ground that it is a want of confidence in the Cabinet as it existed with the noble Lord the Member for the City of London as a Member of it. Well, then, is it a declaration of want of confidence in the Cabinet as it now exists? But we are told almost from the Treasury bench that whatever may be the

effect of this motion—whether the Government win or whether they lose—the event is to be followed by the abdication of all self-confidence on their own part. Do they then object to our voting a want of confidence in an Administration which tells us that the moment it is over, whatever may be the result of the motion, they will consider themselves as no longer worthy the confidence of Parliament? Well, then, is the objection to this motion that it implies a want of confidence in the Government that is to be? That is a question we have a right to ask. Hard has been the fate of the House of Commons of late years. It has often been called upon to vote confidence in men with whose principles it was unacquainted, but it never has yet been called upon to vote confidence when it did not know either the principles or the men. Well, then, when we are asked to pass a vote of confidence in the Government, or to convey censure, the right hon. Gentlemen opposite who have addressed us, I have always argued this case as if the present motion was an attack upon an individual Member of the Cabinet. The whole of this case has been argued by the Government as if this were a personal attack upon the Minister of War.

Now, Sir, for my part I beg to disclaim, in language as clear as I can express my meaning in, that I entirely protest against that Parliamentary conduct which signals out one member of a Cabinet, and, on the pretence of criticizing the administration of his department, visits him with a censure from which the other members of the Cabinet, his colleagues, are to be exempt. I have had occasion in other instances to maintain these opinions, and I have ever acted upon them. I have been asked myself—it was not an appeal made to me in confidence, and therefore, though I will mention no names, I think I am not doing wrong in speaking of it here—I have

been asked, of course by members of the party opposite, whether I could support a vote of censure upon the Duke of Newcastle? There must be many who now hear me who must be cognizant of the truth of what I am stating. This, I believe, was sometime before the period to which the right hon. Gentleman has referred as the first inauspicious day when he heard the administration of the War Department was in disfavour. I say, then, I have been asked by hon. Gentlemen upon the other side of the House whether I would support a vote of censure upon the Duke of Newcastle, and have been assured that such a motion, if proposed, would be sure to be passed by a decisive majority. But I said, as I say now, that I never will, directly or indirectly, be a party to any motion in this House the object of which is to select one member of the Cabinet and make him the scapegoat of a policy, for which the whole of his colleagues are equally responsible.

Now, Sir, it is the fashion, in order to make this management of the case palatable for those who are opposed to the Duke of Newcastle—it is the fashion to say, that this is a vote against the maladministration of his office. Well, it is not for me to defend the Duke of Newcastle. We have had the character of the Duke of Newcastle painted by his colleagues, and I have no doubt their expressions are still fresh in the ear and memory of the House. I do not subscribe to their justice. I only refer to them as coming from an authentic quarter, and which therefore must be supposed to draw a character which at least deserves attention. It is not merely the colleague who has quitted him who gives us an interpretation of his official shortcoming, but his yet remaining colleagues bear equal testimony in an elaborate manner, that the Duke is alike deficient in energy and in experience. Well, Sir, it is not for me to dispute the judgment of a Minister made by his own colleagues; but, so far

am I from wishing to argue this case, or to conduct this debate in any unfair spirit to the Duke of Newcastle, that I am bound to say that, though I cannot but ascribe to the maladministration of the affairs of his office many of those disasters the existence of which no one can deny and few can palliate—although I cannot but do this, yet I am bound to say, I am not at all certain that there was one other member of the Cabinet who, placed in the same situation, would not have carried on affairs equally unsatisfactorily.

If we come to the administration of offices, so far as the conduct of the war is concerned, the Duke of Newcastle is not the only Minister who, in the administration of his office, is in my mind entitled to the notice of Parliament. There is another Secretary of State, who, from the nature of his office, is much concerned in the administration of affairs with regard to the conduct of the war. It is the noble Lord the Secretary of State opposite (Lord Palmerston), whose energy and experience, we are told, are our only compensation for the disasters we have experienced, and the calamities which the Duke of Newcastle has brought about. The noble Lord, having the militia entirely under his superintendence, exercises, of course, considerable influence over the conduct of the war. Now, what has been the administration of his office? What has he done? On the 6th of last February the noble Lord gave notice to this House that he should ask leave to bring in bills for the establishment of the Irish and Scotch militia. — There was not the slightest resistance offered to measures so wise, so important, so urgent. Well, February passed, and the bills were not introduced, though unopposed. They were not introduced by a Cabinet which must at that moment have known that war, if not inevitable, was at least impending. February passed. March arrived. On the 28th of March war was declared. One would have supposed that Ministers

who had declared war, who must have known that a militia was the only sure basis of a reserve in this country, would not for a moment longer have delayed the introduction of these important bills respecting the Scotch and Irish militia. But these bills, promised in February, promised in March—on the 28th of which month, as I said, war was declared—April passed, and these bills were not introduced. May passed away; June passed, and these bills were not introduced; but not till after Midsummer did the noble Lord the Home Secretary, who, we are told, is the only man who can conduct the war, introduce these two bills for the establishment of the Scotch and Irish militia. The consequence was, we were at war; the regiments of the line were taken from Ireland, the English militia was sent to garrison Ireland, and this country was left quite undefended, while, at the same time, the means of supplying our resources were proportionately diminished.

I should like to know, if the Duke of Newcastle had done this, whether his colleagues would not have been pretty sure to have blazoned it forth in his catalogue of misadventures and maladministration? It happens, however, to be in the department of another Secretary of State, who, in the administration of his office, is such a paragon of Ministerial adroitness and ability that we are told he is the only man who can make up for the *laches* of his colleagues. Sir, I say this with sincerity, and, I believe, in a spirit of constitutional justice. I will not doubt that the Duke of Newcastle was placed in an office which he was not equal to, for all his colleagues, with the exception of one right hon. Gentleman, have assured the House in the most elaborate manner that that was the case.

But, Sir, I say the Duke of Newcastle has done nothing for which his colleagues in the first place are not as responsible as himself. He was placed in a new office, with the

most laborious duties, and at a period of such crisis and difficulty, it peculiarly became the colleagues of the Duke of Newcastle, who must have been well aware of what he was doing, to have sustained him with their counsel and their sympathy; least of all did it become them, when he was involved in a difficult position, as he is at present, to have quitted him; or, if they remained with him, to have risen in the House of Commons in order to decry his abilities and denounce his administration.

I have no personal or political relations with the Duke of Newcastle. I need not remind the house that there are many reasons why that is not a very popular name on this side of the House. The Duke of Newcastle, as a politician, was trained and bred on the Conservative benches; he owed his introduction to, and his success in, public life to this party; and, in our opinion, he conducted himself to this party, at a particular moment, with an acerbity of feeling and an ambiguity of conduct which, in his present forlorn condition, we can well afford to forget. But, Sir, I protest against the convenient method which now is brought into a habit of placing all these disasters upon either the maladministration of an individual or the ill-working of a system. Whatever may be the faults of that system, when worked by able men, it has accomplished great things. I shall not enter into that branch of the question at this hour of the night, because I believe that the calamities which we all deplore have not been brought about only, or even principally, by faults of administration, but rather by an erroneous policy, for which certainly the Cabinet must have been responsible, and not a solitary Minister. I think the designs of the Cabinet were hastily conceived. I think they attempted to accomplish them with inadequate means. I think that they were insufficiently advised of the nature of the enterprise in which

they had embarked; and that they showed throughout the whole conception and management of their scheme a want of foresight, of firmness, of depth, of energy, and of all those resources which became a Ministry who had embarked in an enterprise of such vast importance.

Why, Sir, the right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been this very evening referring to the Walcheren Expedition. I remember those debates, and I am sure the noble Lord the Secretary of State opposite (Lord Palmerston) must also remember them. I am only a reader of those debates, but he was a listener. I remember it was pointed out by very able Members of this House that the Government of that day were so ignorant that they had endeavoured by a *coup-de-main* to take one of the strongest fortresses in Europe, and were surprised to find, when about to accomplish that project, that the fortress was defended more strongly than they had been led to believe. Substitute, Sir, Sebastopol for Antwerp, and you have the history of the present expedition. But it was held to be a great misdemeanour on the part of that Ministry to have undertaken a scheme which involved the siege of so strong a fortress without having previously obtained ample and accurate information as to its defences. Why, we now hear from the Ministers themselves that they were surprised at the resistance which had been experienced there, and the strength of the place before which our army under their directions have sat down. And then we are told the ill-administration of an individual Minister easily accounts for the disastrous consequences which must necessarily result from such a gross want of statesmanlike sagacity. The noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) the other night defended himself on account of his conduct during an autumnal tour. But it is not so much of autumnal tours that we complain as of winter campaigns.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies to-night, and the Secretary at War the other night, taunted us with our timid opposition to the Government. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, when he acceded to office some months ago, made his first appearance in that capacity by taunting us for not bringing forward a vote of want of confidence in the Government. He has returned to-night to his suggestion of that political remedy. I think we have had quite enough of these taunts from the right hon. Secretary. I am not ashamed to say we have exhibited a timid opposition to the Government. That has not been because we were afraid of the Government, or the consequences of our opposition if we undertook it; but because we were timid on account of the unparalleled disasters which we found accumulating over the country. We did so because the country was involved in war, and, whatever might be our opinion as to the impolicy which occasioned that war, we felt it our duty cordially to support the existing Government in carrying on the war with vigour and efficiency. And if we now offer no longer a "timid opposition," it is because we find that, notwithstanding the support we gave them—notwithstanding the fact that there has been no vote, either of money or of men, which we have not cordially supported—notwithstanding the fact that during all this agitating period there has been only one measure connected with the war which the Opposition has resisted, and that was a measure universally condemned by the country—notwithstanding the Parliament and the country alike have upheld them, have placed in their hands unlimited means, and have offered at no time a criticism on their acts, the Ministry have so mismanaged affairs that they have broken up from their own incapacity, and have placed the army of England in its perilous and calamitous condition.

The right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer commenced his speech by dilating on the terms of perfect confidence which have prevailed from the first among all the members of the Coalition Government. The House listened with tender surprise to the revelations of the right hon. Gentleman, and, with that admirable consistency of which the Chancellor of the Exchequer is so consummate a master, he concluded his description of this affectionate and perfect confidence existing between all these gentlemen by assuring the House that neither he nor his colleagues were aware twenty-four hours before it was known to the public of the important secession of the noble Lord the leader of the House of Commons. Notwithstanding this unbroken confidence, it seems that some of the Cabinet had to walk down to this House and, from their accustomed places, hear for the first time that their leader had quitted his post. The most important speech made during this debate, which it is impossible to pass over unnoticed, was the speech of the noble Lord the late President of the Council, in which he explained to the House the reasons which had induced him to quit office. I listened to that speech with a feeling shared, I am sure, by the vast majority of the House. I listened to that speech with amazement. It seemed to me I was listening to a page from the *Memoirs of Bubb Doddington*. Such an all-unconscious admission of profligate intrigue is not to be matched in that record which commemorates the doings of another Duke of Newcastle, who was a Minister of England when the House of Commons was led by Sir Thomas Robinson, and when the Opposition was actually carried on by the Paymaster of the Forces and the Secretary at War.

We are perpetually told that it is our blessed lot to live in an age of progress, and yet we have this con-

fession in our purer days of a new morality that the noble Lord the late President of the Council goes to the Prime Minister, and tells him that, in consequence of, I will not say his "antiquated imbecility," as the noble Lord opposite (Palmerston) might, but in consequence of his incapability and incompetence, in consequence of not being "the active spirit of the whole machine," he (the Lord President) proposes that one Secretary of State should be dismissed, and another colleague, the right hon. Member for South Wiltshire (Mr. Sidney Herbert) should be superseded altogether, and his office suppressed. But that is not all. We all remember the combination by which Mr. Canning and Lord Wellesley conspired successfully to eject Lord Castlereagh from the Cabinet, and the recollection of those deeds is still a stain upon the memory of Mr. Canning. But there was this in the last instance which exceeds the conduct of the Cabinet which conducted the affair of the Walcheren expedition, there was this difference—the colleague for whose behest and benefit the conspiracy was intended, was not at least selected as the authority to rebuke with Spartan severity, with more than Lacedemonian rigour, the illustrious conspirator who had sacrificed himself in his disinterestedness of friendship.

The noble Lord the Secretary of State (Lord Palmerston) performed his part in a feeling manner. The noble Lord was sincerely shocked at the conduct of the Lord President of the Council quitting his colleagues without due notice. I should have thought the memory of the noble Lord (Palmerston) might have softened his language of rebuke; for, if he could only recall a period some twelve months ago, if I recollect aright, the noble Lord

equally as suddenly—at as perplexing a moment—when the question of peace or war hung in the balance—quitted his colleagues. The only difference is, that on that occasion the noble Lord did not condescend to give us an explanation as candid as that offered to the House by the noble Lord the President of the Council. That noble Lord appeared to take great credit to himself because he has increased the area of his party, and has always been ready to receive men of ability who have chosen to enlist under his standard, and he seemed to urge that point as if he were vindicating himself from attacks upon the existence of a coalition Government; but no one objects to a combination between public men who have acted in different parties. The noble Lord the Secretary for the Home Department was once a member of the Tory party; Lord Derby, on the other hand, was a member of Earl Grey's Administration. There is no stain upon the character or honour of public men, or inconvenience to the public service, in statesmen, however they may have at one time differed, if they feel themselves justified in so doing, acting together in public life. All that the country requires of public men when they do so act together is, that they should "*idem sentire de republicâ*"—that upon all great questions they should entertain the same views, that in subjects of policy, whether foreign or domestic, they should be animated by the same convictions and the same sympathies.

But with regard to the exisiting Government—if it still be an existing Government—all have seen that, during their career, it does not appear that upon any great question whether domestic or external, they have been animated by the same spirit and sympathies. It is to that circumstance that we must attribute the fact that

they have been so unsuccessful in carrying their measures, or prosecuting their policy. What has been the theory that seems to have kept together the various elements of the Cabinet? The balance of power in the Cabinet is the theory which both sides have attempted to support. That this is so, appears from their own admission. The late Lord President is breaking up the Cabinet, because from the first he anticipated injurious consequences in the conduct of the war from the want of experience and energy of the Duke of Newcastle, and yet he never objected to the office of Minister of War being conferred on the Duke of Newcastle, because it gave him the means of saving the balance of power, and introducing as Secretary for the Colonies a supporter of his side. Thus, in the struggle to preserve the balance of power, the noble Lord was victorious, but he got bolder, and, not satisfied with his success, he invaded the principalities, and attempted to drive out the Minister for War also. That expedition has, however, been no more successful than was that of the Russians some few months since, and what are the consequences?

We are called on to decide upon the motion of the hon. and learned Member for Sheffield, which Her Majesty's Ministers tell us they consider a vote of want of confidence. Well, Sir, that motion is before the House, and we must vote upon it. The vote which I shall give is one which, I believe, will be the vote of the majority of the House. Personally, I care nothing for the consequences, but I feel called upon to decide on an issue which ministers have interpreted into a question of approbation or confidence. I care not by what name it is called, and I must decide according to the opinions I entertain. Sir, I have no confidence whatever in the existing Government. I told them a year ago, when

taunted for not asking the House of Commons to ratify that opinion of mine, that as they had no confidence in each other, a vote of want of confidence from this side of the House was surplusage. I ask the House of Commons to decide if twelve months have not proved that I was right in that assumption, although its accuracy was then questioned. What confidence has the noble Lord the late President of the Council in the Minister for War? What confidence have this variety of Ministers in each other's counsels? They stand before us confessedly as men who have not that union of feelings and of sympathy necessary to enable them successfully to conduct public affairs.

The late President of the Council, in scattering some compliments among the colleagues he was quitting, dilated upon the patience and ability with which the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had conducted the duties of his department. I am not here to question those valuable qualities or that patience, but I say that all the patience and all the ability with which the Earl of Clarendon may have administered, are completely lost by scenes like this, and when the Ministers of this country have themselves revealed their weakness to Foreign Courts, all the ability and patience of that statesman cannot make up for the weakness which is known to prevail in the councils of England. At all times such a circumstance must be injurious, but at the present moment it may be more than injurious. Two years ago England was the leading Power in Europe, but is there any man in this House who can pretend that she holds that position now? If this be the case —if we are called upon to decide whether the House of Commons has confidence in the Ministry, when the debate is commenced by the secession of the most eminent Mem-

ber of the Government—when affairs are in a calamitous state, and when we are told by the late Lord President that the conduct of the war is intrusted to a Minister who he thinks is unequal to the task—I ask the country—I ask this House—I ask the Ministers themselves, whether they can complain that a Member of the Opposition should give his vote according to the belief which he entertains that the affairs of the country are intrusted to a deplorable Administration?

THE CRIMEAN WAR. III.

CHANGE OF MINISTRY.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS, FEBRUARY 24, 1855.

SIR, I am quite sure that the noble Lord (Viscount Palmerston) is correct in anticipating that any existing Government will receive, at the present emergency, a liberal and candid support from this House; but it would have been satisfactory to the House—this being the conclusion of the week—if the noble Lord could have found it convenient to assure the House and the country that a Government was actually in existence. The noble Lord omitted in his speech to answer the arguments of the right hon. Baronet the late First Lord of the Admiralty, and the right hon. Gentleman the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, against granting this committee, and he also made another omission almost as singular, for he appears to have forgot that which I thought we were all collected here to-day specially to hear from him, namely, that he at least had been successful in forming an Administration. If that be the case, as all the House had hoped, I think there is some want of courtesy in the leader of the House of Commons permitting us to adjourn this evening without

having that gratifying information made known to us and the country. Instead of this, the noble Lord says, "So long as we possess the confidence of the House and the country, we intend to do our duty to Her Majesty, and to retain our places." But what we want to know is, who are "we." The moment, indeed, is one of great national peril. The emergency is granted by all. We are ready to extend to a Government, with less reference to party feeling than at any other time, a just and generous support. But it does not appear to me to be a severe condition to be made by Members of Parliament that they should at least be acquainted with the names of Her Majesty's Ministers—that they should have the satisfaction of knowing who are the patriots whom they are asked to support in the fulfilment of these onerous duties under circumstances so grave and so trying.

I am bound to say that, in listening to the remarks of the noble Lord with regard to his conduct respecting the nomination of this important committee, I find them not satisfactory. I must even say that I find them incoherent. I did expect from the noble Lord at least an answer to the argumentative speeches of his late right hon. colleagues. But the noble Lord did not do so. I did expect the noble Lord would to-night at least vindicate the policy which now seems to be the cardinal point of his administration. The noble Lord opposed this committee when it was first proposed, and when it was supported by many hon. Gentlemen on his own side of the House, and by the great bulk of those in Opposition. He opposed it in language the most strenuous, and in a spirit the most uncompromising. In consequence of the decision of the House of Commons, the Government of which the noble Lord was a member ceased to exist. It is unnecessary for me to refer to the circumstances which intervened between that vote and the day

when the noble Lord received the commission of Her Majesty to form an Administration, and I make only one remark upon them, because the noble Lord has fallen into a great inaccuracy in his reference to particulars with which he certainly ought to have been well acquainted—I allude to Lord Derby's attempts to form a Government. Lord Derby never declined, as the noble Lord has stated, the exalted duty which was offered to him because he could not form an Administration, but he declined it solely because he could not form a strong Administration; and, Sir, I cannot admit that the noble Lord, especially in the position in which he now finds himself, after ten days' experience of his more felicitous enterprise, has any right to pride himself upon his superiority over Lord Derby in that respect.

But now let us look to the conduct of the noble Lord with respect to this Committee—his former opposition to it, his present support of it, and his dealings with his colleagues with respect to it. The noble Lord, when a member of the late Government, strenuously opposed the Committee to enquire into the causes which have led to the present condition of our army before Sebastopol, and upon principle, too. The noble Lord, since he has been First Minister, since he succeeded in forming this strong Administration, over which, only a week ago last Friday, he delivered so animated and fervent an eulogium—for it was only last Friday that he congratulated the country on possessing a Ministry distinguished alike for administrative ability, political sagacity, and sufficient liberalism—the noble Lord, when he was called upon to form this Administration, formed it—if upon any principle—upon the principle of opposing this Committee of the House of Commons to enquire into the condition of the army before Sebastopol. In trying to form his Government, there was, indeed, no

other subject on which there required to be any communication between himself and his intended colleagues. They had all of them been members of the late Cabinet. The noble Lord has confessed to-night that with regard to his foreign policy, which absorbs all other subjects, not the slightest difference exists between the Cabinet of which he is the chief, and that of the late Ministry of Lord Aberdeen. There could be, therefore, only one question upon which a frank explanation would naturally take place between the noble Lord and his intended colleagues when he was forming his Administration. The right hon. Baronet the late First Lord of the Admiralty explained, by a cause which we all regret, why there was not that complete conference between himself and the noble Lord which is usual under such circumstances, and we have it from the right hon. Member for South Wiltshire, and the right hon. Member for the University of Oxford—and the noble Lord has not in any way disputed their allegations—that the concession of this Committee was the subject on which they required from the noble Lord, for the satisfaction of their minds, a clear and complete understanding, and, as I collected from the right hon. Gentleman, the noble Lord was of the same opinion then as he had previously been in the House of Commons, objecting to the Committee upon principle, and expressing his determination to resist it.

Well, what did the noble Lord do even last Friday night? He again announces to the House that he will resist the Committee; and on what ground does he found that resistance? Why on the ground of its not being constitutional—no paltry ground, no slight ground, but the most powerful and effective objection that could possibly be stated. Now, Sir, this does seem to me to be very strange that the noble Lord, the First Minister of the Crown, should

within the space of one short—"one little"—week, be prepared to do that which a week ago he deemed unconstitutional. And for what reason, I ask? Simply because he is determined to remain, he says, Minister of the Crown, as no other person, on his own showing, could form a strong Ministry. I imagine there are many persons who could form a Ministry, as strong, at least, as that of the noble Lord. The noble Lord votes against the Committee—he speaks against it—he absolutely forms his Cabinet on the basis of opposing this Committee, and, before a week has passed away, we find the noble Lord rising in his place, staking the existence of his Government on carrying that Committee, and not urging one single reason in favour of that Committee being appointed, or offering the slightest argument in support of this sudden and extraordinary change in his policy. After having listened for hours to arguments which I think are answerable—to precedents with which, I think, the noble Lord might have grappled—to a discussion which I supposed the leader of the House of Commons would have condescended to meet at least in fair debate—the noble Lord changes all his opinions—the opinions which, only a week ago, he himself described as unconstitutional, he accepts—he not only accepts them, but he makes them the basis of his Government. And this is the man whose firmness, consistency, and energy are to save the country!

And this is the man whose firmness and energy are to save the country! I do the noble Lord injustice. The noble Lord did give a reason for granting this Committee. The noble Lord has found out since last Friday, that there is a strong public opinion in the country upon the subject of appointing this Committee to enquire into the condition of the army before Sebastopol, and into the causes

that have produced that condition. He has found out that there is such an almost irresistible feeling in the country that no Ministry would be justified in opposing it. Why, Sir, what a fine observer must the noble Lord be of the nation's disposition—what an acute observer must he be of public opinion—how skilfully must he feel the pulse of the public mind, if it is only since last Friday that he has arrived at that conclusion! The discontent of the country for months, which resulted in the overwhelming majority which destroyed a Government, never induced the noble Lord to suppose that a Committee like this was a great necessity. Called upon to fulfil the most responsible duties which a man can be called upon to perform—called upon to form a Government at a time when one would have thought that if a man could feel deeply or think profoundly he would have felt and thought deeply and profoundly—the noble Lord is still unconscious that this Committee of Inquiry is still a necessity. The noble Lord is still so ignorant of the public mind, and unmindful of that of which all are so conscious, that he forms his Government—not in oblivion, not in neglect, not in forgetfulness of that necessity—but absolutely in defiance of it. Administrative ability, of which we once heard so much, we know has vanished; but I thought at least political sagacity remained. Political sagacity was, I supposed, represented by the first Minister of the Crown; but after the experience of the noble Lord's career, and the speech we have heard to-night, my hopes of his triumphant future are less glowing than I, at first, hoped it might have been. I have made these observations with reference to the change of opinion of the noble Lord—I cannot say change of argument, for he offered us no reasons. I have not changed my mind with regard to the necessity of appointing this Committee; although I have listened with the respect which

they deserve to the speeches of the late colleagues of the noble Lord—speeches which I certainly expected that the noble Lord would have answered. It has been said that this is an unconstitutional course on the part of the House of Commons. I hardly care to enter into that question, because it has been very ably discussed; and I do not know that I should have adverted to it to-night, even after listening to the speeches of the right hon. Gentlemen opposite, had it not been for an observation of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Oxford. I have not come down to-night, Sir, to enter into any debate upon the expediency or inexpediency of granting this Committee. I came down to-night by appointment, to hear three statements from three distinguished statesmen, and to listen, if necessary, to the answer, reply, comment, or criticism of the noble Lord the First Minister of the Crown upon those statements. I certainly think the three right hon. Gentlemen have taken a constitutional course in making their statements to the House. I am quite sure that the House would have felt greatly offended if they had not given a frank exposition of their views, and I think it was a great mistake of the noble Lord when having, more than a year ago, seceded from the Government of Lord Aberdeen, he came back to office without a frank explanation to the House of Commons, and I believe I express the very general feeling of the House upon this subject. None of us have come here to enter into a discussion whether we should have the Committee or not. That is a question which has been settled by an overwhelming majority, and I should like to see the Minister who will, directly or indirectly, attempt to rescind it. But it is impossible not to notice some of the remarks of the right hon. Gentlemen who have addressed us, one of which is brought to my mind by the observations of the

right hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Oxford.

The right hon. Gentleman (Mr. Gladstone) has taunted my right hon. Friend the Member for Midhurst (Mr. Walpole) with appealing to precedents. The right hon. Gentleman found that my right hon. Friend was armed with precedents with which it was not very easy or convenient to grapple. He saw that those precedents had made an impression upon the House, and then he derides this appeal —this recurrence—to the force of precedents, and will not condescend to argue the question on so low a ground; but, let me remind the House, that the question of precedents was introduced to-night by the right hon. Member for Carlisle at the commencement of his weighty and matured speech. The right hon. Gentleman (Mr. Gladstone) said, "You have only one or two precedents in your favour, and those of a bad time." He spoke of them as of no consequence, although he by inference indicated that, if there were many precedents, and they were good, they might have a considerable effect upon the opinion of the House and of the country. My right hon. Friend (Mr. Walpole) quoted many precedents, and good ones, some of which the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Oxford has admitted to be completely adapted to the question before us. There are objections made to some Committees of the House of Commons appointed to consider disastrous circumstances of war, because they were in committees of the whole House. I will mention one precedent which has not been referred to to-night—and which was a Committee of the whole House—in the year 1779, when Lord Cornwallis was examined before a Committee of the whole House —and what was the opinion of Mr. Burke on that subject? Mr. Burke said that the Committee produced no great effect,

from the bustle and confusion that pervaded the House during the time of the examination. I think that is not only a precedent in favour of a select Committee, but it shows, from great authority, how inconvenient Committees of the whole House may be found. If, however, you grant a Committee of the whole House, you concede all the arguments which you urge against Committees in a constitutional point of view, and the precedents in favour of Committees of the whole House to inquire into circumstances analogous to those which have taken place in the Crimea are not one or two only, but their name is legion.

I do not want, however, to place this question upon precedents, numerous as they are. They are to be found in the time of Charles II., when an examination took place into the war with the Dutch and the conduct of the Duke of York; in the reigns of William III., Queen Anne, George II., George III., and during the Regency. I do not, however, place the question upon precedents. I say that, had there not been a precedent to meet this instance, it was the duty of the House of Commons to frame a precedent; because the circumstances are grave. A fine army disappears, and the chief Minister of the Crown in this House, and the right hon. Gentlemen who have seceded from the Government, tell us that, in possession of all the secrets of the Cabinet, the causes of this disaster are to them inexplicable. If there had been no precedent, it was the duty of the House of Commons, I maintain, under such circumstances, to have made a precedent; and, notwithstanding all his refined and sustained argumentation, the right hon. Member for the University of Oxford may rely upon it that the people of England, not in moments of passion, but in the calmest periods of their existence, will always feel that, with such an unparalleled disaster, inexplicable by the chief statesmen of

the day, it was the first duty of their representatives to inquire into the cause of these disasters. "But," says the right hon. Gentleman, "leave it to the Government. Why do you not leave it to the Government? I am for inquiry," says the right hon. Gentleman, "but not inquiry in this way, not inquiry by a Committee of the House of Commons." I am perfectly ready to admit that you might, under ordinary circumstances, have modes of inquiry more satisfactory than the one that has been proposed; but what does that come to? I admit that, under ordinary circumstances, a Government might claim the duty and the privilege of inquiring into mal-administration, and of recommending, and even devising a remedy; but the fact is, that in the present state of affairs the country has no confidence in the Government. It is a conviction that no sincere and efficient relief could be afforded by the administration—either the last or the present; I make this as a general, and not as a personal observation—that has made them feel that it was their own House of Commons from which alone they could obtain redress and satisfaction.

Then the right hon. Member for the University of Oxford takes up the list of the Committee. He seems to be very familiar with the opinions of all the Gentlemen upon it, and he says—and this was almost the most laboured part of his argument,—quoting the opinion of a great authority, that nothing can be done effectually unless the individual who is employed is in favour of the task which he is engaged to fulfil. And it was considered by his friends, certainly, as a very unanswerable argument; but did it not occur to him that it was in effect an argument against the constitution of every Parliamentary Committee that is called into existence every day upon every subject. Why, there is not a Committee upon any subject which does not consist in many of its members

of instruments that are not favourable to the subject-matter of inquiry, and, therefore, if the argument of the right hon. Gentleman means anything, it is good against the whole system of Parliamentary inquiry. Is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to go so far as that? We have heard many sneers at Parliament. We are told the Constitution is in danger, because the noble Lord at the head of the Administration in the course of one week has changed the whole policy of his Cabinet; but certain am I that if you wish to deal a blow against Parliamentary authority, you can deal no more effective one than to impress on the country that the elements of a Parliamentary Committee are not adapted to the effective fulfilment of their purpose. The noble Lord opposite, instead of answering the arguments of his late colleagues respecting this Committee, which a week ago he declared was unconstitutional, and on which to-night he has staked the existence of his Government, has again favoured us with flattering visions of an impending peace.

I am quite sure that, if the country believes that peace with honour can be secured by the noble Lord, the Ministry may count on the earnest support of this House. All I can say is, I hope the instructions which the noble Lord has given to the noble Lord the Member for the City of London (Lord John Russell) are conceived in a more frank spirit, and in more intelligible language than the communications which he had on behalf of Lord Derby with the right hon. Gentleman, and the understanding which he arrived at with his late colleagues as to the basis on which his Government was formed. If the noble Lord has gone to Vienna to be the promoter of peace with a foregone conclusion in favour of war, that, I think, is not a satisfactory prospect for the country. I can, therefore, only hope that his instructions from the First Minister of the Crown have been couched in

more familiar spirit, and expressed in more intelligible terms, than the conditions which he (Lord Palmerston) apparently made to be the basis of his Government—a Government which, after ten days, has experienced a disastrous blow at a time when the noble Lord assures us that it is of the utmost importance that the country should feel that it was effectively and strongly governed, and, when the noble Lord, after circumstances so discouraging to the country, after a week nearly has elapsed since this unfortunate and untoward event has been proclaimed, does not find himself in a condition, at the conclusion of the Parliamentary week, to feel, that by his exertions and all his combinations, he can assure the country that his Sovereign possesses at this moment a complete body of responsible advisers.

THE END.

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